

The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA MILITARE

LA MARINA  
DALL'8 SETTEMBRE 1943  
ALLA FINE DEL CONFLITTO

ROMA 1993

The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

Page i

HISTORICAL OFFICE OF NAVY

THE ITALIAN NAVY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Volume XV

THE NAVY  
FROM 8 SEPTEMBER 1943  
TO THE END OF THE CONFLICT

COMPILER: ADM. OF THE FLEET (c.a.) GIUSEPPE FIORAVANZO

*2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*

ROMA 1971





### **Presentation**

The demand from numerous readers of the series "*La Marina Italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*" shows how much interest in our history and for that dramatic event has been alive. Waiting for a completely new and up-to-date work, which is already being compiled. The Historical Office has decided to reprint the volumes that have been out of print for a long time.

Rome, January 1993

The Head of the Historical Office  
Admiral of the Division  
Renato SICUREZZA

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*In this volume, with remarkable richness of detail, how the Navy operated on the Armistice Day of September 8, 1943 and during the cobelligerence period.*

*It was widely thought to develop the narration of the events associated with the proclamation of the Armistice, in order to give an accurate account of how the Navy's bodies and Commands operated in those tragic days when the difficulty of transmitting and receiving orders often called the initiatory spirit of the commanders even if not of a high rank as well.*

*Part III also highlighted the contribution made to the struggle of the patriots by those elements of the Navy who have great chances and opportunities to participate in this struggle, thus respecting the tradition of obedience, sense of responsibility and combativeness of the seafarers.*

HISTORICAL OFFICE OF THE NAVY

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Adm.	=	admiral
Adm. Div.	=	Admiral of division [Rear Adm.]
Adm. Fleet.	=	Fleet Admiral
a. n.	=	Naval weapons (officer corps)
an.	=	antiship
br. Gen	=	Brigadier - general
c.	=	Complement (after a military grade [Reserve
Officer])		
A.A.	=	antiaircraft
Capt.	=	captain
Corps.	=	Army Corps
Capt. Corv.	=	Captain of corvette [Lt. Cmdr]
Capt. Frigate.	=	Frigate captain [Commander]
Capt. vascello	=	Captain of a vessel [Captain]
Tkr,	=	Tanker
Cn	=	Gunboat
Col.	=	colonel
comm.	=	commissioner
Cdr	=	commander [of vessel]
C.R.E.M.	=	body of real sea-going mariners
Cr	=	Armored
Csmg	=	sub-chaser
DD	=	Destroyer
Cov	=	corvette
D.I.C.A.T.	=	Territorial Anti-aircraft defense
div.	=	division
Dm.	=	minesweeper
d. m.	=	engineer (officers corps)
F.A.	=	armed forces
F.A.M.	=	Facing the sea
fl.	=	flotilla
F. N.	=	Naval forces
g.c.	=	Large caliber
Gen.	=	General
Gen. Br.	=	Brigade general
Gen. C.A.	=	general of the Army Corps [Major Gen.]

Gen. Div.	=	General of the Division
gmr.	=	Guard of the sea [Midshipman]
g. n.	=	Navy Engineer (corps of officers)
CL	=	Light cruiser
Cr.	=	Cruiser
aux. Cr	=	Auxiliary cruiser
Maj.	=	Major
Tkr(m)	=	Tanker (motorship)
M. M.	=	Maritime military (Navy)
Mn	=	motor ship
Mp	=	trawler
Ms	=	torpedo boat
Mv	=	lookout vessel or Patrol Boat
MVEL	=	Sailing Vessel (motorized)
M.V.S.N.	=	Voluntary national security Militia also Black Shirts
Mz	=	Landing craft or lighter
BB	=	Battle ship
No	=	Hospital ship
CV	=	Aircraft carrier
Ns	=	School ship
Nt	=	Transport ship
p. c.	=	Small caliber
SS	=	Steamer
Pm	=	Minelayer
r.	=	Recalled (after a military grade)
Rim.	=	tug
sub	=	submarine
S. M. or s.m.	=	General Staff
Sq.	=	Fleet
Sqg.	=	squadron
S.ten.	=	2 <sup>nd</sup> lieutenant
Sten. Vasc.	=	lieutenant [Ensign]
Ten.	=	lieutenant
t.col.	=	Lieutenant Colonel
ten. Vasc.	=	Naval lieutenant
TB	=	torpedo boat
Tr	=	transport
v.amm.	=	Vice Admiral

## PART I

### FROM THE ARMISTICE TO COBELLIGERANCE



## CHAPTER I

### HOW THE NAVY FACED THE ARMISTICE

#### 1<sup>st</sup> THE DIRECTIVES OF THE SUPREME COMMAND IN THE IMMINENCE OF THE DECLARATION OF THE ARMISTICE.

On September 3, 1943, after laborious negotiations outside the scope of this volume to examine and narrate, it was secretly signed at Cassibile by Gen. Smith in the name of Gen. Eisenhower and Gen. Castellano in the name of Marshal Badoglio the so-called Short Military Armistice, so conceived:

- “1 - Immediate cessation of any hostile activity by the Italian Armed Forces.
- 2 - Italy will make every effort to deny to the Germans all that could be done against the United Nations.
- 3 - All United Nations prisoners and interns must be immediately handed over to the Allied Commander, and none of them can or will be transferred to Germany at any time.
- 4 - Immediate transfer of Italian fleet and Italian aircraft to those places that may be designated by the Allied Commander in conjunction with details of their disarmament that will be fixed by him.
- 5 - The Italian merchant navy may be requisitioned by the Allied Commander in order to satisfy the needs of his naval military program.
- 6 - Immediate return of Corsica and of all Italian territory, both of the islands and of the continent, to the Allies, to be used as bases for operations or for other purposes according to the decisions of the Allies.
- 7 - Immediate guarantee of free use by the Allies of all airports and seaports in Italian territory, without taking into account the development of evacuation of Italian territory by German forces. These ports and airports will have to be

protected by the Italian Armed Forces as long as this task is not taken by the Allies.

8 - Immediate recall to Italy of the Italian armed forces from any participation in the war in any area in which they are currently engaged.

9 - Guarantee by the Italian Government that, if necessary, will use all its resources to ensure the prompt and precise execution of all armistice conditions.

10 - The Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces reserves the right to take whatever measures he considers necessary for the protection of the interests of the Allied Forces in the continuation of the war, and the Italian Government undertakes to take those administrative or other measures which may be required by the Commander in Chief, and in particular the Commander in Chief, will establish an allied military government on those parts of the Italian territory that he will deem necessary in the military interest of the Allied Nations.

11 - The Commander in Chief of Allied Forces will have full right to impose disarmament, demobilization and demilitarization measures.

12 - Other political, economic and financial conditions that Italy will have to commit to execute will be forwarded later.

13 - The conditions of this armistice will not be made public without the Commander's permission at Allied Headquarters.” (1)

---

(1) It is worth remembering immediately that, in order not to interrupt the follow-up of the narrative, on September 29, the Marshal Badoglio - moved to Malta on the *Scipione Africano*, accompanied by the Court of Justice, Courten and English Gen. Mac Farlane - signed on the battleship *Nelson* together with Gen. Eisenhower in the presence of Gen. Alexander the *long armistice*, in many aspects more severe than the short and largely already outdated (hence it is not necessary to reprint it), as is apparent from the following letter written on the same day 29 September by Eisenhower to Badoglio: My dear Maresciallo Badoglio - The terms of the armistice that we have affixed our signatures are now complementary to those of the short military armistice signed by your Representative and my own on September 3, 1943. They are based on the situation before the cessation of hostilities. Developments following that date have considerably changed the *status* of Italy, which has become a UN collaborator. It is fully acknowledged by the Governments, in the name of which I act, that these terms are for some respect overcome by subsequent events and that many of the clauses have become inactive or have already been implemented ... It is understood that



To this short armistice was accompanied by a memo, known as the *Quebec Document*, which began with the following fundamental proposition:

"Armistice conditions do not cover the active assistance of Italy in fighting the Germans. The extent to which these conditions will be modified in favor of Italy *will depend on the extent of the government's and the Italian people's contribution* to the United Nations against Germany during the rest of the war."

This initial proposition followed various instructions and suggestions about how Italy could deal with the armistice and collaborate in the Allied cause. As far as the Navy (and Air force) was concerned, it was written: "The Italian government must at the time of the armistice give orders to the Italian fleet and to the most possible merchant navy to sail for allied ports. As many military aircraft as possible will have to fly to allied bases. Any aircraft or aircraft in danger of capture by the Germans must be destroyed ... No warships or merchant ships must be dropped into German hands ... The Germans must not be allowed to take over Italian coastal defenses."

Finally, there was a sentence that could have called into question (as it actually happened) the Navy: "Prepare the plans because, at the appropriate time, Italian formations in the Balkans may march toward the coast in anticipation of being transported to Italy by the United Nations."

On the same day, September 3, De Courten, Minister and Chief of the G.S. of the Navy, was summoned by Marshal Badoglio together with the Heads of the other Armed Forces. The Marshal informed that negotiations were underway to conclude the armistice; He added that the news was to be kept secret and that, in his view, the situation did not allow any other way out. No details were made on the date of the end of the armistice (which had already happened) and on the probable proclamation.

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the terms, both of this document and of the short military armistice of September 3, 1943, can be modified from time to time if the military necessity or the measure of cooperation by the Italian Government indicates this as desirable. Sincerely yours D. Eisenhower."

That armistice was called *long* because it had to "remain in force until it is replaced by any other agreement or until the peace treaty with Italy comes into force".

In any case, the Supreme Command on 6 September sent to the Chief of Staff of the three Armed Forces the provisions contained in *Memorandum no. 1*, in which no mention was made of the armistice that was about to be proclaimed.

Here is an excerpt of the text, of which we reproduce some fundamental and all that interesting the Navy:

*"1 - Foreword.*

This memo is concerned with the fact that Germanic forces *initiate* acts of hostility against government bodies and against the Italian armed forces, to the extent and with the means to make it clear that these are not local episodes due to the action of someone irresponsible, but collective action of hostility.

Such acts may consist of occupation of commands, organs of connection, railway stations, ports, airports, etc.; transmission interruptions; disarming of guards; Enclosure of units and yield statements; real war actions; etc.

*2 - Situation of Germanic terrestrial forces in Italy at the date of 1 September 1943.*

(From the list were present in Italy. 17 Germanic divisions, as well as minor units at different points).

*3 - Actions of Army Units.*

(The following prescription is remarkable: "Moreover, we must order our contraction batteries to open fire against German planes and not to shoot against Anglo-American aircraft" and the others to "prevent British prisoners from falling into German hands.")

*4 - Actions of the Navy.*

a) German warships and merchant ships: they must be captured or, in the impossible, sunk or at least made unusable, in any port, by the commands and personnel of the R. Navy, with the assistance, where necessary, of units of the Army.

b) It must be absolutely prevented by any means that Italian warships or merchant ships fall into German hands. Not being able to avoid the above, the ships will have to be scuttled.

c) Units of the German Navy located at various bases: Naval Commands, in agreement with those of the Army,

they will be captured or otherwise will put them in a condition not to harm.

d) Italian War Ships: they must leave as soon as possible to the sea all those in sailing conditions, to reach the ports of Sardinia, Corsica, Elba, or Sebenico and Kotor; All immobile ships, or that in one of the above-mentioned refuge ports will be in condition to fall into Germanic hands, will have to be scuttled.

e) Italian merchant navy: armed and in conditions of move will have to depart soon to reach Italian, Dalmatian or Albanian ports south of Ancona's parallel, and in the Tyrrhenian to the south of Livorno.

Unarmed or ships not in condition to move will have to be made unusable for a long time by sabotage.

f) Logistic facilities, arsenals, dry-docks, etc. of the naval bases: they must be rationally unusable by means of *removals* preventing their rapid return to efficiency.

g) Maritime bases: they must be placed in defense, in order to allow the execution of the measures referred to in the preceding paragraphs; Arrangements will be made with the Grande Unit Commands responsible for defending the bases.

h) Various units of the Navy: where not employed in carrying out the above tasks, they will have to contribute to the tasks of the Army units, subject to precise arrangements between the relevant Commands of the two armed forces.

#### *5 – Air Force.*

(Provisions similar to those for the Navy as far as the airfields and non-transferable flying materials were concerned.) Prescription to keep possession at any cost of the Lazio airports where all fighter aircraft for the defense of the capital would have to pass, While bombers, reconnaissance and assault airplanes would have to be flown to Sardinia).

#### *6 – Employment of gas by the Germans.*

It is necessary to foresee: then put all available means of individual and collective defense into efficiency.

7 - The directives referred to in this memo will be implemented following the distribution of the following clear message to the three Chiefs of Staff or initially if the connections are interrupted and the circumstances referred to in 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph are met:

*“Implemented public policy measures Memorandum no. 1 Supreme Command.”*

From this memorandum which must be returned to the bearer, each Chief of Staff of the Armed Force may take the notes considered indispensable, which he will keep jealously guarded on his person or in a safe.

Orders for this memory must be verbally given, a rule that applies to all subordinate Commands. The predispositions, which, by necessity, will have to be taken by executive bodies, must be motivated as preparations for the case of Anglo-American attack.

The predispositions to take are of *utmost urgency*.

Keep in mind that unplugged or sporadic actions are of no worth, but coordination and minute preparation is required.

8 - Standby Orders for the Army Group East Command, including the Aegean.”

It is inferred from this text that the Supreme Command - with prescriptions - of the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph - was concerned with keeping rumors from the Germans, so as not to alarm them. However, the requirements we mentioned above and made part of paragraph 3 made it clear that the armistice was imminent.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> PRELIMINARY MEASURES TAKEN BY THE NAVY.

On the afternoon of September 5, the Chief of G.S. General (General Ambrosio) had asked Adm. De Courten a courtesy to bring a group of officers from Gaeta to Ustica, where at dawn of the 7<sup>th</sup> he would find an English cruiser who would take them aboard and take them to at Palermo, two senior allied officers would have to be taken to Gaeta and hence to Rome, while Adm. de Courten suggested instead to employ a corvette that was *Ibis* (Leut. Giulio Pelli) and to join the group with a naval officer. Selected the Capt. Ernesto Giuriati of the Supermarina Operations Office and posted to R. Adm. Maugeri (Head of the Information Office)

to direct the mission. It took place regularly between 20:00 of 6 September and the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> after dark, and the *Ibis* just landed at Gaeta with the two senior allied officers and the Adm. Maugeri, was made to go on to the deserted bay of Porto Conte in Sardinia with the order of being "quarantined" until new order: the secrecy of the mission accomplished. The quarantine order was canceled shortly after midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The group of Italian officers, including 11 Army officers, 1 of the Air Force and Capt. Juriati, near Ustica, had been transhipped on the British Gunboat *TE-046*, waiting for the *Ibis* and taking them to Palermo. Captain Juriati remained at the Allied Navy Command in the Mediterranean as a liaison officer.

The same afternoon of September 5<sup>th</sup>, Gen. Ambrosio had mentioned to Adm. De Courten that the mission to Ustica was related to the armistice's conclusion, whose declaration was foreseen for a day between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, probably 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>. He also informed him that - in all likelihood - the Fleet (whose bulk, as you will see, was concentrated in La Spezia) should have been at La Maddalena, where it was possible for the King to go with the royal family and with a part of the government.

This latter intention of the sovereign was confirmed by Ambrosio to Amb. De Courten in the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, pointing out that it would be implemented if the situation had precluded the operation of the Government in Rome and that the military chiefs would follow him. As a result the same day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Supermarina

He ordered that:

- the two DD *Vivaldi* and *Da Noli* were in Civitavecchia from the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, ready to move in two hours;
- two corvette were ready in Gaeta;
- two speedboats were ready at Fiumicino.

At noon on September 6<sup>th</sup>, it was delivered to Adm. De Courten *Memorandum no. 1* of the Supreme Command. They was immediately summoned to Rome for the following morning the admirals directly dependent on the Supermarina, unable to send written orders or extracts from the *Memorandum*.

On the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> he received from the hands of Chief of the G.S. General was a memo written in English by a certain Commodore Dick (*Memorandum Dick*) in which the rules for the movement of the fleet were indicated in their particular execution

of the armistice. These rules laid down which concentration centers for major vessels and for submarines Malta, Palermo, Augusta, Gibraltar, and Tripoli - all under British control - while the minor vessels was admitted that it could remain in Tyrrhenian, Adriatic and Ionian ports, provided Were to the south of Civitavecchia's parallel and were not controlled by the Germans, modes and routes were also fixed for the transfer of those units that were not already there.

Adm. De Courten not knowing about the signing of the armistice, believed that the Dick *Memorandum* was one of the documents related to the ongoing negotiations: he protested to Gen. Ambrosio said that no Navy representative had been called to participate in the drafting of the document, although it appeared to be linked to the criterion of not leaving ships in German hands, Gen. Ambrosio replied that the Dick Memorandum would have fallen to thin air, because Anglo-Americans had been asked that the ships could all concentrate in La Maddalena, which could be presumed to be granted. (1)

"During the night," writes the Adm. De Courten in his report - having examined in detail the "Dick" *Memorandum*, considered it necessary to make two memos ... that could be delivered to the Chief of the General Staff General only at midday on the 8<sup>th</sup>, as he was absent from Rome on the 7<sup>th</sup>."

In the first he insisted on the opportunity and the necessity for the fleet to concentrate on La Maddalena. In the second, he confirmed his protest, "it is apparent that in his editorial staff [that of Dick] only the British unilateral view was taken into account, without any Italian expert being able to present logical considerations and objections." He then went on to observe that while "they were reported in par. 2 the ports in which Italian forces *can* direct ", in par. 3 and 4, on the other hand, were indicated, specifying for the great Naval Force of La Spezia that "must head for Bona where the ships will receive instructions for further navigation, without indicating the port of destination. It is also stipulated that merchant ships should focus on Gibraltar and Alexandria, that is, in highly eccentric areas, without taking into account the indispensable necessities of supplying the nation ... Finally, the state of the organs of command

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(1) The Adm. De Courten knew after some time that Commodore Dick was only the Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Fleet.

and the disarmament measures of naval units is left to the full will of the allied authorities, without any limitation that safeguards our dignity and above all the safety of our ships. No mention of the essential problem of the flag”.

And now, for what happened between the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the afternoon of September 8th, we reproduce the pages contained in a report compiled on February 12, 1944 by Adm. De Courten, given the importance of the subject: (1)

"On the evening of 6 September, given the increasingly apparent symptoms of imminent Anglo - American offensive action against the coasts of Southern Italy (perhaps even the Ionian but certainly the Tyrrhenian), in harmony with the directives imparted by the Supreme Command and confirmed very recently in Meetings of G.S. Chief held with the participation of the German side at Palazzo Vidoni [headquarters of the offices of the Supreme Command], was ordered to disperse 22 submarines along the likely approach routes of the Anglo-American convoys and to the presumed landing areas, and were put into state alarm the MAS Flotillas. The provisions for naval forces and air defense and security forces had already been issued with special operating orders.

"On the morning of September 7, I was with the Adm. Bergamini, Commander in Chief of the Battle Fleet, arrived in Rome for the meeting I had convened for, a talk on the spirit of the fleet. I had full and explicit assurance that the fleet was ready to go out to fight in the southern Tyrrhenian waters for its last battle. He told me that commanders and officers were perfectly aware of the reality they were going to meet, but that everyone was firm in their decision to fight as much as possible. The crews were full of faith and enthusiasm. Training had made good progress in recent times. The agreements reached with the Italian and German air forces, and the experiences they made, were well placed to be able to finally count on a fair aviation-naval cooperation. He confirmed that by intervening at the landing operation that had begun and taking advantage of the inevitable crisis of that delicate phase, it would have been possible to inflict severe damage on the enemy. I remember this interview

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(1) On the cover of the report is written "reproduced largely from memory for lack of documents." However, the comparison between it and the documentation held by the Historical Office has shown that it essentially corresponds to the historical reality.

with emotion because of the words of that man, who always lived on ships and for ships, emitted without any hesitation the tranquility of being able to ask the mighty organism in his hands extreme effort and total sacrifice.

"Knowing that the underwater forces were already in motion and the lesser torpedo forces were ready to take action, *I could not think and I can not say today that the Navy was captured by the armistice in full material and moral efficiency.* [Italic is ours].

"In the early hours of the afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup>, I meet at the Ministry: the Commander in Chief of the Battle Fleet, Adm. Bergamini;

The Commander in Chief of the Naval Force for traffic protection, Adm. Somigli;  
Commander in Chief of Submarines, Adm. Legnani;

The Supreme Commander of the Naval Force stationed in Taranto, Adm. Da Zara;

The Commander in Chief of the Department of Spezia, Adm. Maraghini;

The Commander in Chief of the Department of Naples, Adm. Casardi;

The Commander in Chief of the Department of Taranto, Adm. Bruto Brivonesi

The Maritime Military Commander in Venice, Admiral Brenta. (1)

"Also attending the meeting was the deputy chief of the G.S. Adm. Sansonetti, the deputy chief of the G.S. adjunct Adm. Giartosio, Secretary-General Adm. Ferreri.

"No copy of *Memorandum* No. 1 of the Supreme Command, nor was any written order given. I do not even have a copy of that *Memorandum*. The admirals took personal notes, according to a outline prepared previously by Supermarina, which referred to the points of the *Memorandum* that were of particular concern to the Navy. The provisions laid down were as follows:

a) put in a defensive state all ships and ground installations;

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(1) The Commander in Chief of the Department was the Adm. Ferdinand of Savoy, Duke of Genoa. Because he has to be replaced shortly by Adm. Brenta, Adm. De Courten had found it appropriate to summon the latter.



b) Strengthen the surveillance of military establishments, works, liaison centers, etc .;

c) prevent and deter at any cost the occupation of ships, works, communications stations, logistic centers, etc. By the German side;

d) arrange for the interruption of German connections;

e) remove German units and naval ships if they commit acts of hostilities;

f) prepare for the departure of efficient naval ships for the following destinations:

- ships in Upper Tyrrhenian Sea: Sardinia, Corsica, Elba;

- ships in the Ionian: Kotor;

- ships in the Adriatic: Kotor, Šibenik;

g) Efficient trading ships had to be concentrated in the same ports and berths;

h) military ships not in condition to move for work or else had to be sunk;

i) The merchant ships found in the same conditions was to be the same with the opening of *Kingston* valves; (1)

l) in the event of a German attack, British prisoners (other than those of color) likely to be present in the territory were to be released;

m) in the event of a German attack, the German planes flying on the sky of naval forces and bases should be considered as enemies and not to act against Anglo - American aircraft;

n) *the foregoing measures were to be taken following a formal order* sent by Supermarina by the order of the Supreme Command, or *on the initiative* of the Command in Chief, in agreement with the Armed Forces Commanders responsible for territorial defense, if the attack was manifested by the Germanic side before receiving the conventional order.

"I did not think it opportune to give the present news of the negotiations in progress for the armistice, not having received in this regard that general information under the constraint of secrecy: but I understand that to many of the participants of the meeting had not escaped the meaning of the

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(1) The Kingston valves are large valves that allow entry of sea water and are distributed among the various watertight compartments, each of which is subdivided.

rules relating to prisoners of war and German and Anglo - American aircraft contained in the *Memorandum* of the Supreme Command."

This impression of Adm. de Courten was confirmed by some of the admirals at the meeting wrote in their reports. Moreover, in the report of Adm. Zara contains other prescriptions, not mentioned in the Adm. De Courten, namely: supplying complete food, water and oil to the ships in conditions of moving - supplying food and ammunition to all ground installations - bearing in mind that there may be a possibility that Germans make use of gas.

These three provisions have been quoted, not only in respect of historical accuracy, but also because the first of them had some psychological reflection, when in the afternoon of the following day, September 8, the ships proceeded to embark on ordered supplies: they did not miss those aboard who wondered how to reconcile the abundant supply of food with the order of being prepared to go out for the ultimate sacrifice. Only the sudden flow of news from the armistice eliminated any perplexity.

And now let's go back to the report of Adm. de Courten, returning to the point where we left it:

"Given the uncertainty of the situation, it was considered necessary to establish a conventional signal with the Naval Forces Command, which would have to proceed to the self-immolation of ships, possibly offshore and on high seas.

"To facilitate a unitary action of command on the minor ships, I ordered the Commander in Chief of the Naval Force for traffic protection to immediately send two of his subordinate admirals (Admirals Nomis di Pollone and Martinengo) to La Spezia directly to take over the command of torpedoes and minor sub-hunters, respectively, and the third (Rogadeo) to Taranto itself for the same purpose.

"Having thus made direct contact with all the Superiors Commander Supermarina (since, as is well-known, Mariprovenza, Marisardegna, Maricorsica, Maridziaia, Marialbania, Marimorea, Mariegeo were directly dependent on the use of the respective Armed Force Commands, to which the Supreme Command had communicated its directives), I was sure that in any event everyone would know how to behave.

"There was no doubt about the timeliness of the orders being forwarded, as each of those present, returning to their respective headquarter in the daylight hours of September 8<sup>th</sup>, summoned admirals and subordinate commanders on the same day to personally convey the imparted provisions, so as to maintain the secret Security. *In fact it happened that, for the unexpected advance of the armistice, there was not only time to take the orderly predispositions, but not to notify all the Subordinate Commands.* [Italic is not in the original text, but these are of crucial importance].

"On the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> of September I conferred with Adm. Bruno Brivonesi, Commander M.M. [Naval] of Sardinia, arriving in flight from La Maddalena, and having known to him that he had already been informed by Gen. Basso, Commander of the FF. AA. [Armed Forces] of Sardinia, on the contents of the *Memorandum n. 1* of the Supreme Command, gave him the provisions concerning the possible mooring of the fleet at La Maddalena and the possible presence in that base of the royal family and part of the government: I ordered him to depart immediately for La Maddalena, where in fact Adm. Brivonesi came before the evening.

"The same morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, as it also confirmed the beginning of American-American landing in the Gulf of Salerno, after having contacted the Chief of the G.S. General, I ordered the Battle Fleet, in La Spezia, to alert, keeping ready to move from 14:00, *for the expected offensive intervention in the landing area* the next morning and arranging for the agreements made with him to be perfected and implemented Italian and German air forces for aviation cooperation.

"In the morning, I went to the headquarters of the S. G. General, returning to the headquarters, and handed him the two memos [already mentioned]. The Chief of the G.S. General informed me that Anglo - Americans had rejected the proposal to concentrate the fleet at La Maddalena, allowing them to be left available H.M. the King a cruiser and 4 DD escort. He also told me that he was insisting on the acceptance of the proposal and still hoped to be able to get something. The Chief of the G.S. General also told me to await orders before starting the Fleet from La Spezia, to which he was given orders to go when ready in two hours.

"From 18:00 to 19:00 I attended a meeting at the Quirinale presided over by H.M. the King, to whom I was summoned urgently

just before 18:00. At this meeting, the Chief of the G.S. General made it known that:

a) the armistice had been signed by September 3, with a verbal reservation, to choose for its notification the most convenient day in relation to military preparations of an operational character to be taken by both the Italian and the Anglo – American part;

b) the morning of the same day the Gen. Eisenhower had said he felt it necessary to speed up the times, which would result in a public announcement of the immediate coming into force of the Armistice at 18:30;

c) The Supreme Command had protested against this sudden decision, which overwhelmed the established plans, and sent the deputy-Chief of the G.S. General, accompanied by American Gen. Taylor [who was one of the officers transported by the *Ibis* and then came to Rome in the car for the project, not implemented, of the Allies in the defense of the Capital], to induce Gen. Eisenhower desist from his purpose;

d) The Reuter Agency had already issued a communication, which would in any event alert the German government and military authorities.

"And indeed during the meeting it was known that Gen. Eisenhower was making the radio pre-announced communication he held behind - shortly after similar communication by the Head of Government, Maresciallo Badoglio.

"At a subsequent meeting of the Chiefs of Staffs of the armed forces at the Supreme Command became aware of the armistice clauses, signed on 3 September. The reading of these clauses, for the part of the Navy, allowed me to understand the meaning of the Dick *Memorandum*. *I discussed with the Chief of G.S. General the possibility of ordering the scuttling of the ships of the fleet*, emanating the established conventional order. But having taken note of a sheet attached to the armistice text, in which it was explicitly said that the definitive treatment of which Italy would have enjoyed would have been linked to the loyalty with which the armistice clauses would have been executed, it was decided to give ready and complete application to the agreement concluded by the Government and explicitly endorsed by H.M. the King at the meeting held shortly before at the Quirinale. However, I must point out that, given the time now advanced and the state of preparation of the surface forces, it was not possible to apply it in full and immediately

the *Dick Memorandum*, which provided for the departure of the Italian ships from their bases at sunset to be at the dawn of the next day, with high speed navigation at predetermined points.

"I immediately went to the Ministry for the issuance of all orders relating to the application of armistice clauses after asking the Supreme Command to send me an integral copy of the armistice protocol as soon as possible."

### 3<sup>rd</sup> ORDERS AND PROCLAMATIONS ISSUED FROM SUNDAY OF 8 SEPTEMBER TO MONDAY 9.

At 18:30 on September 8, Algiers radio gave the world Eisenhower's announcement of the immediate entry into force of the armistice with Italy.

At 19:45 the Italian radio broadcast the following message by Maresciallo Badoglio:

"The Italian government, recognized the impossibility of continuing the unprecedented struggle against overwhelming adversary power, with the aim of saving further and more serious disasters to the nation, demanded an armistice of Gen. Eisenhower, Commander in Chief of the Anglo - American Allied Forces.

"The request was accepted.

"Consequently, every act of hostility against the Anglo-American Forces must cease by the Italian Forces everywhere. However, they will react to any attacks from any other source."

At 21:00 radio Malta broadcast an English-speaking appeal of the Commander in Chief of the Allied Armed Forces in the Mediterranean, which was repeated in Italian at 02:15 of the 9<sup>th</sup>:

"Message of the Commander in Chief of the Allied Naval Forces of the Mediterranean. - Sailors of the Italian Fleet and the Italian Merchant Marine, your country is about to cease or ceased hostilities against the United Nations; The German Armed Forces are now openly hostile to the Italian people they have betrayed so many times, they intend to take over your ships, which will urgently have to cooperate in the transport of food to Italy, and your warships will have to protect this transport against the German attacks: therefore agree your own ships be scuttled and rather than allow them to be captured. Ships in the Mediterranean sailed to get safe from the interference of the

German Armed Forces, sail at once to North Africa and Gibraltar, Tripoli, Malta, Haifa, Alexandria or Sicily to await the final outcome. Ships in the Black Sea sailed to Russian ports; If you lack on coal, oil, fuels, go to neutral ports; If you come across United Nations Forces, please report your identity as follows: Raise a flag black or dark blue on the main mast, shown on the bridges of the large disks as identification for the airplanes; At night if you encounter darkened ships light up weaker lights than the usual lights of your lanterns and report to them following the provisions that the United Nations forces tell you”.

At 11:50 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the following proclamation was broadcast in clear language to all ships and to all the Naval Commands from Adm. De Courten:

"Sailors of Italy - For forty months of very hard war you have faced to the most powerful Navy of the world by accomplishing heroisms that will remain written in golden letters in our history and dealing with sacrifices of blood that have deserved the admiration of the Homeland and the Respect of the enemy. You would have deserved to be able to accomplish your duty to the very end by fighting armed forces equal to enemy naval forces. Destiny wanted otherwise: the severe the serious material conditions in which the Homeland is living force us to lay down our arms. It is possible that other hard duties will be reserved, by imposing moral sacrifices against which the same blood appears secondary: it is necessary for you to demonstrate at these moments that the steadiness of your soul is equal to your heroism and that nothing seems impossible when the Future destiny of the country is in play. I am sure that in every circumstance you will know how to be up to your traditions in fulfilling your duties. So you can look fiercely in the eyes of the opponents of forty months of struggle, because your war past gives you full rights. De Courten."

*The text of this proclamation was spiritually appropriate and historically justified by the results of the preceding forty months of maritime struggle. It could not have been that a Navy was lost that, with the Air Force's cooperation, had sunk 412,000 tons of enemy warships against 269,000 lost. It was our Navy who had to lay down arms for "the serious material conditions in which the country was living."*

Orders that the Adm. de Courten hastened to return to the Ministry after meeting at the Quirinale, in the situation that was determined by the sudden and unexpected announcement of the armistice, they had these purposes:

- to obtain the immediate cessation of hostilities by all naval vessels at sea (orders issued between 20:00 on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the first hours of the 9<sup>th</sup>); This was particularly important for the submarines, especially for those who had been sent off against allied landings already begun in the Salerno sector;

- start to certain ports the ships were moored in locations where it appeared more serious danger to fall into German hands;

- to inform the Fleet that it had to leave La Spezia as soon as possible, with units in Genoa;

- to direct all Commanders to the true extent of armistice with regard to the Navy, since no one (except himself and his immediate collaborators) knew the clauses;

- make special arrangements for some ships destined for immediate missions.

Let's now give you the main messages that are outlined.

As far as the Battle Fleet is concerned, the Adm. de Courten in his report:

"I took a phone call from Adm. Bergamini, since it seemed to me urgent and necessary to examine the moral situation of the Battle Fleet, who, being ready to go to fight, and then brought to that temperature which was essential to face a supreme trial, came to be at any moment in the conditions of having instead to practically surrender to the hands of the enemy. Adm. Bergamini, surprised by both the news of the armistice and the consequences derived for the Fleet, pointed out that the state of mind of the admirals and subordinate commanders, whom he had summoned immediately, as soon as the Armistice was made known by radio, was unanimously oriented towards scuttling of the ships. I told them that they were even more seriously sacrificing, than to fulfill honestly and at any cost to the harsh conditions of armistice: this bitter sacrifice could have brought great benefits to the country in the future. I offered him the opportunity to depart with the Fleet for La Maddalena, where it was already ready for mooring the ships, so

to immediately remove ships from the German threat, to the influence of the terrestrial environment, to the repercussions of contacts and discussions between general staffs and between different ship crews. Adm. Bergamini, after a few minutes, confirmed to me that the Fleet would leave as soon as possible with all the ships present in La Spezia, including those in work, as long as they can move, even with one engine. I assured him that no armistice clause provided for our ships to have the lower the flag or be transferred and I informed him that the decision to accept the armistice had been taken by order of H.M. the King, and that Grand Adm. Thaon di Revel, an unsurpassed example of a straightforward character and sentiment of military honor (with whom I had given shortly before), had comforted me with his precious opinion. Finally, I told him that in La Maddalena, the next day, he would find orders for his next line of action. I instructed him to put the Commander in Chief of the Department of La Spezia aware of my communications. At 02:00 the Navy was in motion, including the ships in Genoa.”

Here are the texts of the main orders given, with the end-time protocols:

#### DAY OF THE 8<sup>th</sup>

a) 19:00 hours: From Maricosom [Submarine Fleet Command] to all subs in the Mediterranean (stop) From the reception of the present order, the task is exclusively repeat exclusively exploratory.

b) 21:10 hours: From Maricosom to all subs in the Mediterranean (stop) From receipt of this message cease all hostility (stop) report receipt.

c) 22:19 hours: From Supermarina to Naples Naval [by phone]: At the command of the Supreme Command and Supermarina do not make any resistance to any Anglo-Saxon landings. Cancel all naval alarms.

d) 22:33 hours: From Supermarina to Maripiazza Taranto (stop) Hostilities are suspended (stop) Inform all the dependent Commanders.

e) 22:33 hours: From Supermarina to all Navy Commands [by telephone] (stop) [repeated the same order given by Telegraph to Maripiazza Taranto].



f) 22:34 hours: From Supermarina to all the ships in navigation (stop) Hostilities are suspended (stop) Reach the destination ports without carrying out any war activities.

g) 22:35 hours: From Supermarina to Mariprovenza, reserved to your staff (stop) Get to the nearest national harbor all Italian ships under conditions to move (stop) Sunk things that can not move (stop) Uninterested in French ships.

h) 23:34 hours: From Supermarina to all Italian merchant ships (stop) Hostilities are suspended (stop) Reach destination ports without carrying out any war activities.

i) 23:44 hours: From Supermarine to all Metropolitan and Extra-Metropolitan Commands (stop) Germanic ships are left free to depart according to orders that they will receive from the German Navy by making predictions to avoid unannounced meetings with national ships.

[This dispatch would certainly be transmitted only to La Spezia; The Navy Commands of Genoa, Livorno and Piombino had it, probably retransmitted by La Spezia].

l) Many special orders to military and merchant ships who were carrying out missions and were not merely "on the go": all orders to bring them back to the ports or bases from where they were leaving or to go to designated destinations.

m) No order to Navy Commands outside metropolitan continental territory because, as mentioned in the excerpt of the de Courten Report, they would have received orders from their Armed Forces Command.

#### DAY OF THE 9<sup>th</sup>

n) 06:31 hours: From Supermarina to all the authorities on the ground and aboard German troops march on Rome (stop) soon Supermarina may not be able to communicate (stop) Ordered by the King honestly executed (semi-stop) armistice clauses with this honest execution the Navy will make very high service to the country. De Courten.

o) 06.00 - 06-40 hours: Orders of Supermarina to *Scipione Africano* and Cov. *Scimitarra* and *Baionetta* departing from Taranto, Brindisi and Pola to Pescara respectively, at high speed. Order to *Scipio* (which was part of the

Light Group "Cadorna" attached to the Division) said:

"06:00 hrs: From Supermarina to *Scipio* and for knowledge 5<sup>th</sup> Division and Group "Cadorna": (stop) Activate immediately (stop) Just ready to leave the port by heading to Pescara where you have to embark on high personage (stop) Arranged sending Pescara Corvettes *Scimitarra* and *Baionetta*."

p) 06:42 hours: From Supermarina to the 5th Division of [Adm. Da Zara on the *Duilio*], which was in Taranto: Decipher yourself (stop) Sail immediately to Malta with ships under your command excluded *Scipio* (stop) Set yourself to arrive daytime hours coming from the Levante (stop) You will find orders (stop) From armistice clauses is excluding ceding Ship and Lowering Flag (stop) Lifting large black brush (stop) Put large black disks on the bridge (stop) Artillery and launcher for keel (stop) Night Recognition Signals Alfa Range Repeat Range High (stop) In Case meeting ships turn on dull running Lights (stop) attenuate.

q) 09:00 hours: from the Command 5th Division to ship *Giulio Cesare*, who was in Pola: [Repetition of the same order received by Adm. Da Zara on *Duilio*].

r) 07:15 hours: From Supermarina to all authorities on the ground and on board (stop) Execute *Memorandum n. 1* public order of the Supreme Command (stop) As it does not conflict with armistice clauses.

s) 07:24 hours: From Supermarina to DD *Vivaldi* and *Da Noli* [who were at sea directed to Civitavecchia] (stop) Edit my previous order immediately head to La Maddalena.

t) 09:26 hours: From Supermarina to all units in navigation and do not execute any diversion orders if the order does not form the conventional word *Milano* (stop) For High Commands will be given separate orders. [Directed to avoid the consequences of orders that may have been issued disguised by the Germans].

u) 12:30 hours: From Supermarina circular message (stop) Summarize armistice clauses (stop) Immediate cessation of hostility (stop) Italy will make every effort to subdue warfare to the Germans (stop) British Prisoners transferred to fellowship authorities to the Fleet and Italian air force will move to a designated location with non-delivery clause and not lowering flag (stop) For the main naval forces and merchant ships of the Tyrrhenian it is Bona (semi-stop) for those of the Ionian it is Malta (semi-stop) for submarines it is Malta (stop) Augusta (stop) Minor ships including torpedo boats remaining in national ports

controlled by us (stop) Mercantile Navy is requisitioned by Anglo-American (stop) Immediate yield of Corsica and all of the Italian territory including islands for free use by the Anglo-Americans of ports and airports.

[This dispatch was repeated several times, until 00.38 of the 10<sup>th</sup>].

v) Many other special orders, amongst which we quote the following because of the importance of the reasons for them and the events that followed (as will be seen below):

- Immediate move to Venice and Pola from Trieste, where they were, the large motor ships *Saturnia* and *Vulcania* to embark all members of the Naval Academy, including pupils who had been transferred from Livorno to Venice Lido, and complementary Naval preliminaries students that were in Brioni: destination Brindisi;

- Immediate departure from Trieste to Pola (where they found orders to continue for Canaro, then changed to Brindisi while they were sailing) of the sailing schools ships *Vespucci*, *Corombo* and *Palinuro*;

- exonerated from their duties was the Duke of Aosta (Inspector General of Mas, who was at Lerici in La Spezia) and of the Duke of Genoa (Commander of the Department of Venice) leaving them to be able to execute the orders of the King.

It should be noted that wireless communications with La Spezia were interrupted on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>; Those with La Maddalena and Livorno the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>; Those with Venice, Naples and Taranto - though with difficulty and with breaks - lasted up to all the 10<sup>th</sup>. But from 17:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Supermarina had almost to cease communication with the periphery.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> THE HEAD OF THE NAVY LEAVES THE CAPITAL. OTHER PROCLAMATIONS AND IMPORTANT MESSAGES.

Writes Adm. De Courten:

"At 04.30 on September 9, the Chief of the G.S. General informed me by telephone that, in view of the military situation created around Rome, where large German units were heading towards the capital, His Majesty the King had decided to leave immediately for Pescara, giving the order that the General Staff

Greater they would join him there. As a result I had to leave within the shortest time of time for Pescara. I pointed out that I felt my presence needed in Rome to perfect the emanation of orders regarding the application of the armistice. The Chief of General Staff confirmed to me the explicit order of His Majesty, telling me to leave to the central command bodies the task of issuing the orders still needed.

"I immediately summoned the deputy-chief of State Staff to me [Adm. Sansonetti], the Secretary General [Adm. Ferreri] and the Chief Cabinet [Capt. Aliprandi] who were on duty at the Ministry: gave orders to the former to take the direction of the General Staff and to second to the Ministry, with the directive to fully apply the armistice clauses and to keep their organizations intact and compact. I ordered that the light cruiser *Scipione* from Taranto, a corvette from Brindisi and a corvette from Pola would begin as soon as possible converging at the maximum speed for Pescara, where I would impart their direct arrangements,

"At 06:30 I left Rome to reach His Majesty the King".

The King left Rome on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> with the Queen and the Prince Ereditario, following the Head of the Government, the Military Ministers, and the Chief of Staff. From Pescara he continued to nearby Ortona, further away from Germanic forces marching from north to south.

The *Baionetta* (Piero Pedemonti) arrived in Pescara from Pola at 21:05 of the 9<sup>th</sup>. In Pescara he found Marshal Badoglio with the Head of the Navy de Courten; He embarked on them and went on to Ortona, who left at 01:10 on the 10<sup>th</sup> after embarking on the King with all those accompanying him (altogether 57 people). At about 16:00 on the same day, the King and the people accompanying him landed at Brindisi, taking accommodation in an apartment in the building where Adm. Rubartelli, Maritime Military Commander was staying.

The *Scimitarra* (Leut. Remo Osti) arrived at Pescara at 07:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup> and, finding no one to embark, he left for Brindisi four hours later. In sailing, he was ordered to go to Taranto, where he arrived at midday.

The cruiser *Scipione*, departing from Taranto at 10:45 on the 9<sup>th</sup> high speed cruising, arrived in front of Pescara a few minutes after midnight on the same day of the 9<sup>th</sup>. From the Capitaneria he knew the high personages had embarked or were embarking on the *Baionetta*

in Ortona, to Brindisi. He landed immediately, and made contact with the radio with the *Baionetta* she reached him at 00:00 in the morning, escorting her to Brindisi. During the crossing with repeated the radio signal to the *Baionetta* all the most important messages that intercepted, so as to keep the King and the political and military leaders informed of the evolution of the situation.

It is here to reprint the proclamations issued by the King and the Head of Government and transmitted from Brindisi by radio on 10 September.

"For the supreme goodness of the Homeland, which has always been my first thought and purpose of my life, and with the intent of avoiding more serious suffering and greater sacrifices, I have authorized the request of the armistice.

"Italians, for the salvation of the Capital, and in order to be able to fully fulfill my duties as Kings, with the Government and with the military authorities, I have moved to another point of sacred and free national land. "Italians, I rely on you for every event, as you can count to the utmost sacrifice on your King.

"God helps Italy in this grave time of its history.

Vittorio Emanuele".

Badoglio himself was reading on the radio:

"Italy has been forced to declare that it can not continue the struggle in the face of the overwhelming power of the Allies. Destroyed industries, paralyzed railways, entire neighborhoods of our cities reduced to ruined heaps, impossible to supply food to generous southern populations.

"German domination also takes away the freedom to declare us victorious. It oppresses the country, oblige it to be still a war theater and to suffer horrors and ruins, exclusively for the Germanic interest. The Italian people, the working masses who believed with the armistice to begin the laborious reconstruction of the country, see in our country not only weigh the German occupation, but continue the war.

"The truth is that Germany, continuing the war on our soil, tries to keep it far from its territory.

"Italians, the Germans will end as soon as possible to oppress you, the war will move away so quickly from our wretched country, the more you know how to react with energy and firmness to

German bullying, the more you will hinder the oppressor in his designs.

"After three years of being allied to the war with egoistic criteria and in their exclusive interest, the Germans have returned to be openly enemies, as in the past, of the Italian people.

"You will derive from this a great deal of consequence, and you will regulate upon them your thoughts and actions.

"At the end of the painful affair, in Italy, the unquenchable rancor will remain for all abuses and harassments suffered, a common heritage, to all peoples who have suffered in Germanic oppression in Europe."

Fortunately, for Europe and for humanity, the rancor has not remained: the memory of a sad and tragic story remained, with Nazi Germany being the protagonist, but that Democratic Germany has widely redeemed.

On the same day, Churchill and Roosevelt addressed Marshal Badoglio together with the following message (which was preceded by one of Eisenhower, which is not considered indispensable to reproduce because it contains the same concepts, although narrower to the military field). Badoglio received it on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

"Marshal, it is up to you, in the distressing time of your country, to take the first decisive measures to reach peace and freedom for the Italian people and to regain Italy an honorable place in the civilization of Europe.

"You have already delivered your country from the fascist servitude; It remains the most important work of liberating Italian soil from the German invaders ...

"People of Italy, the time has come for every Italian to deliver his shots together with the liberating armies of the Western world, who come to your rescue ... We have powerful forces, which proceed from many points ... If Help us in this great liberation movement, you will once again be assured of a place among sincere old-age friends of your country, from whom you have been unfairly dismissed. Seize every opportunity you present; Strongly hit and hit in full. Have faith in your future. Everything will be fine. Advance with your British and North American friends in this great world movement towards the goals of freedom, justice and peace."

Badoglio responded on September 13, addressing both (Churchill and Roosevelt):

"I thank you very much for the message that you, who direct the destinies of such great nations, have wanted to send to me in these tragic times for my country.

"I am confident in your statement that the Anglo-American forces, who have already landed at several points on the Italian continent, will continue to flow as numerous and as urgently as the imperative situation requires.

"Our armed forces, already exhausted and scattered in Italy and even beyond Italy, have no chance of meeting and effectively opposing the German forces alone. But all that is possible is, and will be, done with that same spirit and with the same tenacity that we expressed together on the battlefields of Italy and France during the Great War.

"I can assure you that the Italian people, all close to their King, and who at the expense of any sacrifice to attain freedom and peace with justice, will not fail to do their duty and all their duty on this occasion .

"Faith is not lacking and we will march with you, or American and British friends."

Also on the 10<sup>th</sup> Gen. Eisenhower addressed to Marshal Badoglio his message:

"The whole future and honor of Italy depend on what its armed forces are now ready to do. The Germans are definitely and deliberately entering the field against you. They mutilated your fleet and sank one of your ships; They attacked your soldiers and took over your ports. The Germans are now attacked on land and on the sea, and on ever larger scale in the air. It is time to act. If Italy, from the first to the last man, stands up now, we will have every German by the throat. I therefore propose to make a ringing call to all Italians who love the country. They have already done much on their own initiative, but these actions seem to be uncertain and uncoordinated. They need to be guided, and to fight it is necessary and essential to give your people a clear and efficient idea of the situation. Your Excellency is the only man who can do this. So you can help us free your country from the horrors of battlefields. I urge you to act promptly; The hesitation would be interpreted

by our common enemy as a sign of indecision and weakness."

Badoglio's response on equal opportunity:

"Received Your Message (Stop) Since yesterday, orders have been sent to all armed forces to act vigorously against German aggression. Today, a message from the King will be forwarded and a proclamation to the Nation (Stop) It is indispensable now, Mr. General, that our actions be coordinated since We have the same opponent to fight (Stop) Please send me at Brindisi a specially qualified officer who will let you know the situation (Stop) Together situation however requires that your assistance is as fast and powerful as possible (Stop) Badoglio".



## CHAPTER II

### THE OBEDIENCE OF SHIPS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

#### 5<sup>th</sup> EVENTS OF THE BATTLE FLEET.

##### a) *Adm. Bergamini summons the commanders twice.*

On September 8, Bergamini had summoned the admirals and the commanders of his staff in Rome at 18:00.

Given that he could not communicate everything he knew from the Minister, he said that very serious government decisions were imminent. For the Nation and for the Armed Forces it could be considered that there was only one orderly and intact force: the Navy. No matter what would happen, no ship would have to fall into foreign hands: English or German that they were. Rather scuttled upon receipt of conventional telegram "I recommend strict confidentiality". If the telegram did not arrive, because of the impossibility of the Central Authority to communicate, set itself an initiative on the basis of the current situation, bearing in mind the directive not to deliver any ship into foreign hands. Try to run scuttling in the depths, but as close to the coast as possible to allow the safe salvation of the crew, which by the order of the King did not have to sacrifice. If it is impossible to get to the depths of the sea, scuttling should be done by putting the self-destructive means into effect.

The conventional telegram "Implementing Public Order Measures "was also foreseen in *Memorandum n.1 of the Supreme Command*". For ships this would mean capturing the Germans who were on board [for the service of the connections] and implementing the *special alert* by placing the ships in immediate defense against any sudden attack from the outside.

At 22.00 after the second call of the Minister and Chief of the G.S. De Courten, Adm. Bergamini reconvened admirals and commanders.

He informed them that the German crew embarked on the ships had all been landed; He confirmed the instructions given in the afternoon; Said he did not know yet which orders would be given to the Naval Forces, whether to stay in port or to go to Sardinia or elsewhere. He added that the relative orders would probably come after a summoning of Adm. de Courten by Marshal Badoglio, scheduled while he was speaking; that he would issue new orders the next morning.

b) *Departure and first phase of the crossing.* (Map 1).

Towards 03:00 in the morning of September 9, the ships of the Battle Fleet in La Spezia were out of the roadstead, headed for Maddalena's anchorage as orders arrived in the meantime.

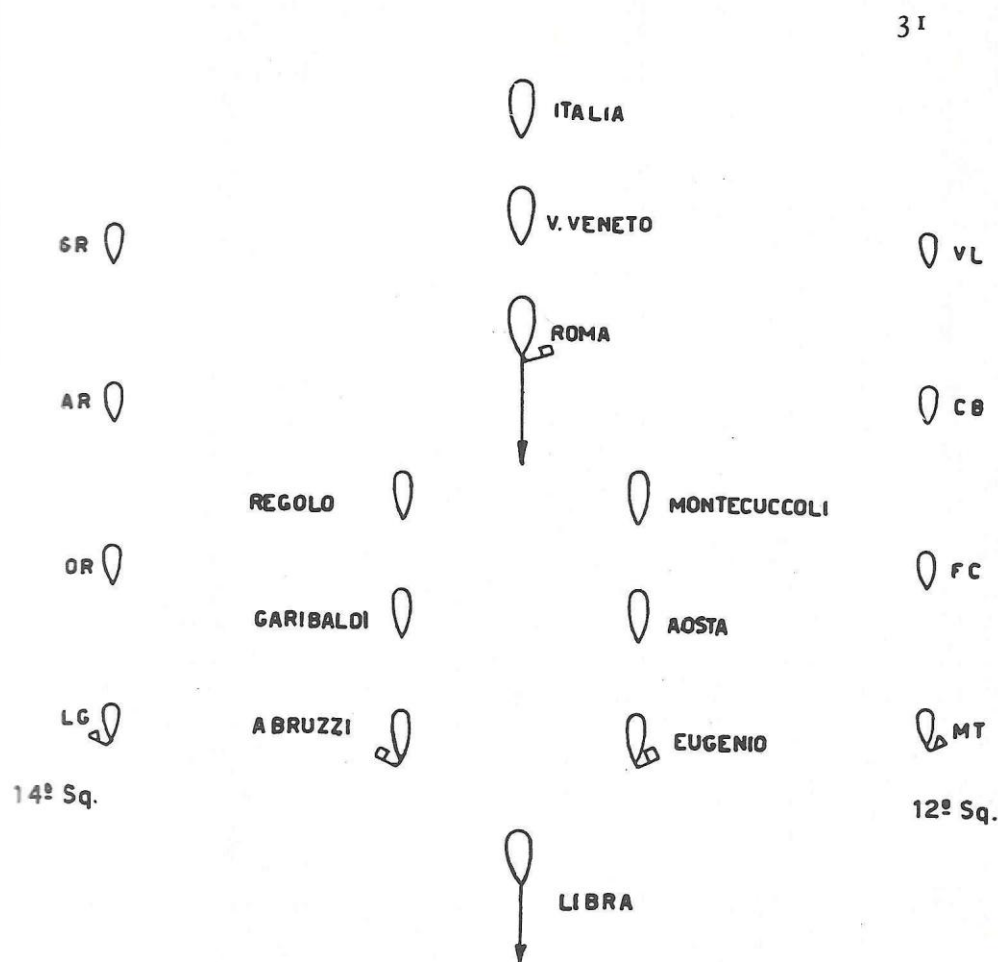
From Genoa, they headed for the meeting with the ships in the port (8<sup>th</sup> Division with the TB *Libra*, to whose commander Adm. Luigi Biancheri, Adm. Bergamini had repeated by telephone what he had told the commanders in La Spezia, and then sent to Genoa Captain Nicola Bedeschi - Commander of the DD *FR.21*, former French *Lion*, who was not in a state for departure - to confirm and comment on the situation and the provisions that had been issued. The meeting of the two groups took place around 06:30 in the morning at Cape Corso.

At 04:13 Bergamini reported to everyone: "Beware of torpedo bombers at dawn", and at 07:07 he repeated "Maximum attention to air strikes."

At 06:45, the Navy went south to west of Corsica, with a speed of 22 knots, with a total of 18 ships in formation, as shown on the next page.

Towards 08:40, the Navy saw the *Pegaso*, *Orsa*, *Orione*, and *Impetuous* torpedo boats, who proceeded in a group with the same route (having departed from La Spezia shortly before the Naval Force by order of Bergamini, who at the meeting of the afternoon he had informed the *Pegaso*'s commander and also the group that he had been considering his dependence since then) and that they continued to sail on the bow, in an advanced escort.

Between 09:45 and 10:56 there were four aircraft alarms for sighting of reconnaissance that were kept out of the shot: the speed



### Legenda

9ª Div.: *Roma* (amm. Bergamini) - *Vittorio Veneto* (amm. Accorretti, comandante della 9ª Div.) - *Italia*.

7ª Div.: *Eugenio di Savoia* (amm. Oliva) - *Duca d'Aosta* - *Montecuccoli*.

8ª Div.: *Duca degli Abruzzi* (amm. Biancheri) - *Garibaldi* - *Attilio Regolo* (aggregato).

12ª sq. ct: *Mitragliere* (cap. vasc. Marini) - *Fuciliere* - *Carabiniere* - *Velite*.

14ª sq. ct: *Legionario* (cap. vasc. Baldo) - *Oriani* - *Artigliere* - *Grecale*.  
torp.: *Libra*.

Proveniente da Genova era l'8ª Divisione colla *Libra*.

was increased to 27 knots. All sighted reconnaissance were recognized for English except for those at 10:29, coinciding with the second alarm. At 11:10, ended the last aerial alarm, after finding the English nationality of the aircraft.

Shortly before sighting Asinara (12:10), the Naval Force was placed in a single line ahead, in the order of 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Divisions with the DD in close proximity on both sides and with the torpedo boats ahead.

As soon as sighting Asinara, the Naval Force turned 45° on the left to take the safe route to the west entrance of the Maddalena estuary. The two squadrons of DD came aft to the larger ships, in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> squadrons, and the *Eugenio* assumed - in the lead - the direction of the navigation.

Meanwhile, at Supermarina, intercepted the signals warning of aircraft from the *Roma*, she asked at 13:00 if they would send fighters if possible to protect ships. The Deputy Chief of the G.S. of the Air Force Gen. Giuseppe Santoro, who was left only after the departure of the Chief of the G.S. Gen. Sandalli, assured he would give orders to the air forces of Sardinia; but no fighters was seen by the ships (1).

Towards 13:00, Supermarina, warned that Germanic forces had occupied La Maddalena, ordered the Navy with a radio message compiled at 13:16 to head to Bona.

It was possible to receive on the *Roma* at 14:24 and at 14:45 the Naval Forces reverses the route at one time to the left, heading again - in the opposite direction - towards Asinara.

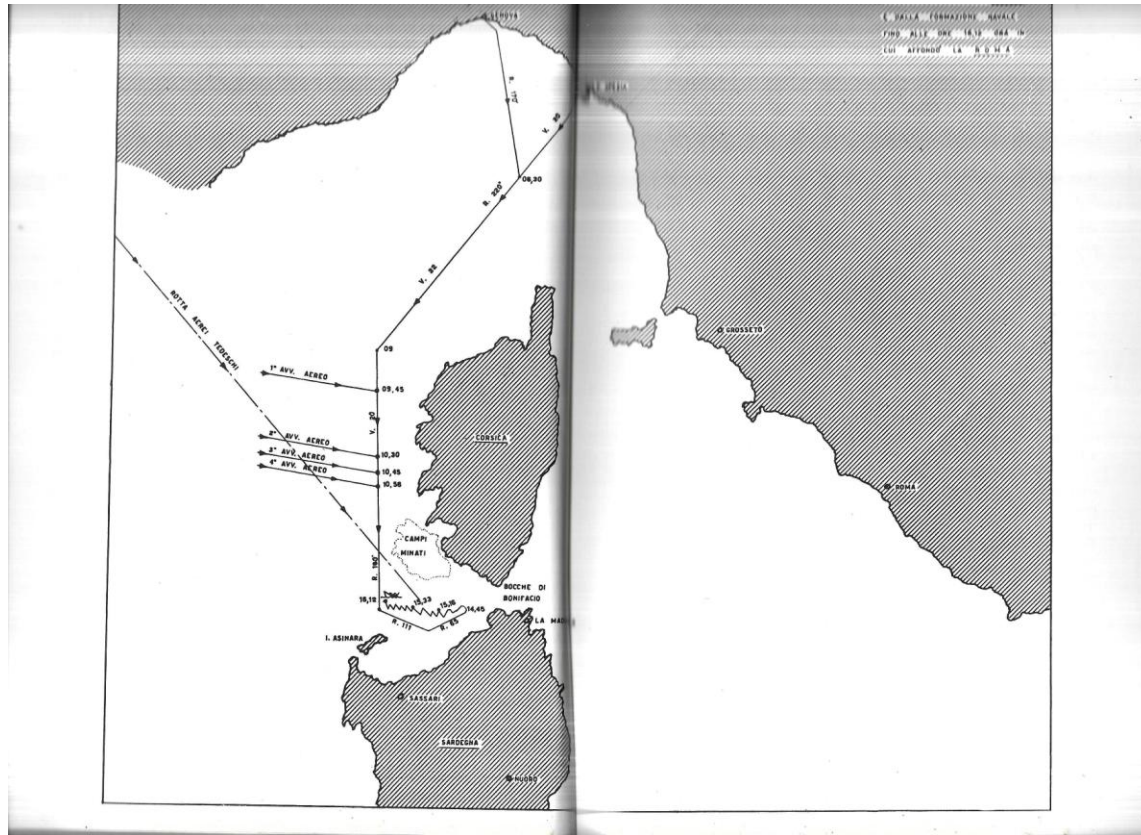
Following the reversal of the route, the formation resulted from head to tail: 11<sup>th</sup> DD Sqd. – 12<sup>th</sup> DD Sqd. - *Libra* - 9<sup>th</sup> Div. - 8<sup>th</sup> Div. - 7<sup>th</sup> Div. – Torpedo Boats group. Naturally the squadron ships and the flagship ships were in the queue of their respective units, so that the closest DD to the *Roma* was the *Mitragliere*.

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(1) In the volume released by the Aeronautics Historical Office *Italian Aeronautics in the Liberation War* on page 38 is written: "On the morning of September 9, Supermarina had requested protection measures to naval forces," which then in the text did not it is spoken. Instead, in the "Chronology of Important Events" inserted between the end of the text and the appendices, it is noted: "9 September - The first war mission against the Germans was executed by 4 Mc. 202s to execute an escort to a naval formation in navigation. It is to be assumed that the four fighters could not reach the sky of the naval force."

# The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

Chart n. 1



Meanwhile Supermarina had at 13.20 compiled and then aired the following message directed to all ships in navigation:

"La Maddalena occupied by German forces (stop) Our Command overwhelmed (stop) Ships dependent on Silurantisom directed to La Maddalena instead go to Portoferraio, except for those combined Naval Battle Forces of Milan."

c) *The sinking of the Roma.*

At 15:10 there was a first airborne alarm after those in the morning. It was an aircraft formation, recognized at 15:37 for German Junkers, who shortly after launching their bombs, particularly directed against the battleships. The ships, just perceived the release of the bombs, started the A/A fire obeying the directive to react to any attacks contained in the radio messaging of Maresciallo Badoglio, launched at 19:45 on the previous evening. The ships maneuver to disturb the attacker's aim and increase the likelihood of evading the bombing, no ships were hit in this first attack; one of the attacking aircraft was hit. It was noticed that some bombs were to be rocket bombs of a new type.

At 15:50 a new group of bombers was spotted, against which the fire was immediately opened without waiting for the intention to attack. In this second attack two bombs fell on the *Roma* within a few minutes of each other, despite the fact that the ship had already turned about 60° during the defensive counter-maneuver that she was running.

"At 15:52 stands out - writes Adm. Oliva- the explosion of the big bomb (someone claims it was a rocket bomb) [and in fact it was] and then we hear strong explosions in succession. There is an enormous cloud of black smoke mixed with very high red flames. Since the *Eugenio* is in the queue of the controversial formation and having the ships maneuvered independently, one can not distinguish which battleship is struck ... At 16:12 the *Roma*, which appears heavily listing on the starboard, and with the trunk of the deck aft already in the water, has turret 2 [ie the second from the bow] completely removed by the explosion and a vast fire corresponding to the forward turrets, command bridge and - on the left side - at the furnace chimney. The keel breaks: The two halves are vertical and she sinks."

Here is what happened to the *Roma*.

When the ship was hit the first time, he had already fired six salvos with the 90-mm anti-aircraft pieces of starboard.

The first bomb had fallen a meter away from the starboard side just aft of the center of the ship, bursting under the hull and then acting like a magnetic mine. The motors corresponding to the two aft propellers had stopped and the speed had dropped to 16 knots.

The second bomb fell on the left side between the control tower and the raised 381 turret, causing flooding of the propeller trucks (corresponding to the two external propellers) and the ship's arrest, the explosion in very rapid succession of all the forward magazines, fires in numerous premises with cessation of power supply, the turning of the control tower to the right side.

After the first bomb, the measures immediately taken by the personnel contained the heeling of the hull within the limit of 2°; but after the second, the enormity of the devastation caused by the explosion in the powder magazine quickly put the ship in despair. It began to list on the starboard and stopped for a few moments with the starboard truncated 50 centimeters from the water. It was then that the Ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Incisa, most senior of the few surviving officers (and that, despite the serious burns reported at the time of the deflagration, because he was near the tower in the left-wing shooting tower, he was able to run to the stern), ordered the ship abandoned.

Immediately after the ship, accelerating the rotation movement, it broke into two parts and disappeared.

The rescue of the shipwrecked will be told in a forthcoming paragraph.

d) *The last phase of the crossing and the first contacts at Malta with the English.*

As soon as Adm. Oliva - who was the senior of the three division admirals - reported that the ship hit was the *Roma* (requested to the 9<sup>th</sup> Division) reporting at 16:12 that he was taking command of the naval force. He had already, a few minutes earlier, ordered the *Regolo*, the 12<sup>th</sup> DD Sqd. and the "Pegaso" group to attend the attacked ship.

In the meantime, the Adm. Biancheri had signaled him, proposing the return to La Spezia.

At 16:20. Adm. Oliva telegraphed Supermarina: "*Roma* severely hit and burned by air bombs at 15:52, lat. 41° 08' long. 08°09' afterwards sunk (stop) Assumed Naval Force command (stop) instruct me". This message could only be transmitted at 17:00. Because the area congested by other radio transmissions.

Other attacks by German bombers occurred at 16:29, 18:00, 18:34, 19:10. At the first of these attacks a bomb struck the *Italia* on the bow: the ship took on about 800 tons of water (0.17% of its displacement), and informed Adm. Oliva that she could navigate at 24 knots. The A/A reaction of the ships were always ready and intense.

Meanwhile at 18:40 the Naval Force had received confirmation of the order to go to Bona: this confirmation was precious for Adm. Oliva, who had no instructions because the original order had been directed to the *Roma* with a cipher held only by the Command in Chief of the Battle Forces.

However, he decided to go on a west course until the night, until 21:00, to disorient any German reconnaissance, and then turned south towards Bona.

At 20:15 he informed Supermarina of the situation with a detailed radio report at 20:30, which is reported here.

" 15:52 Hours: *Roma* hit by German aircraft presumed explosion of ammunition magazine sinking 16:12 hours (stop) Sent for recovery of shipwrecks DD *Mitraglere*, *Fuciliere*, *Carabiniere* et *Regolo* & torp. Type *Pegaso* (stop) I presume those ships have many wounded on board wondering if they can go Bastia or other Corsican port (stop) Please give them direct orders because I can not connect (stop) Naval formation subjected to continuous air strikes, *Italia* hit not severely (stop) 19:00 hrs sail west I will keep until sunset then south unless orders are contrary (stop) If I can send remaining DD to Bona and direct larger ships Algiers (stop) I could not decipher some telegrams directed to *Roma* because I do not encrypt so if necessary I ask for further instructions".

Meanwhile, at 20:25 Supermarina had circulated an encrypted message to make everyone aware of the general situation:

"Supermarina 47570 - Situation at 19:00 hours. Battle Naval Force 17:00 in lat. 41° 17' long. 08° 22' direct west route Bona (semi-stop) battleship *Roma* strike hit by bombs of British aircraft [Supermarina



had not yet received the previous message of Oliva (1)] is sunk at 16:30 hrs (semi stop) battleship *Italia* hit not seriously and 5<sup>th</sup> Division departed from Taranto for Malta at 17:00 hrs (stop) Steamers *Vulcania* & *Saturnia* with torp. *Audace* on whose is the Royal Highness [Duke of Genoa] departing from Venice (stop) Are partially occupied by Germans Genova Livorno Civitavecchia Navy Command La Maddalena Trieste (stop) Missing news La Spezia (stop) Conflict in Bari (stop) German Troops are approaching Rome (stop) Germanic units attack Systematically our ships (stop) Adm. Martinengo deceased action between two German sub hunters and MTB near Gorgona (stop) Asking Admiral Bergamini and Milan (stop) 192609."

In the text of this message, as it was intercepted and deciphered on *Scipione*, there are two important final phrases inserted before the conventional word Milano, which constituted a message transmitted by Supermarina at 20:10 (ie 15 minutes before) and that on *Scipione* were incorporated in the message, at 20:25, as if they belonged to them. Here: "Germans are entering Rome San Paolo radio station occupied (stop) Predicted eventuality not being able to exercise command. 192109".

Of all the topics touched by Supermarina (except those concerning the Naval Force) we will talk in due time. However, it is worth noting the importance of these two messages (Admiral Oliva and Supermarina), which clarified the general trend of events in that fateful and, in some respects, decisive day of 9 September.

Returning to the crossing of the Naval Force, when at 21:07 it was 23 knots per route 168° to Bona, it was made up of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, the 8<sup>th</sup> Division (less the *Regolo*), the 9<sup>th</sup> Division (less *Roma*), the "Legionario" Squadron and the *Velite*. This DD had not followed his squadron (12<sup>th</sup> "Mitragliere") because Command 8<sup>th</sup> Division with a clear message had ordered him to stay at the 8<sup>th</sup> Division, interfering with his orders that at that time was giving by Adm. Oliva to provide for the rescue of *Roma*'s personnel.

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(1) At 16:14 the 8<sup>th</sup> Division Command had, perhaps with excessive precipitation, informed Supermarina that naval formation had been attacked by 37 British aircraft and that *Roma* had been hit with the risk of sinking.

Let us recall here that during one of the air strikes, the *Legionario* had recovered six British aviators from one of the reconnaissance that followed our Naval Force and had been shot down by one of the German aircraft; They landed at Biserta. The British had a direct testimony of the tragic affront to our main Naval Forces.

During the night Adm. Oliva signaled to his ships the message of the Minister de Courten of 11:50 of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the order of the King to loyally perform the armistice clauses not involving either the ceding of ships or the lowering of the flag,

At 7:00, the Naval Force spotted a British reconnaissance and all the ships (which already had black disks painted in the deck) lifted the agreed black pennant.

At 07:50, three British fighters began to circle the Naval Force and at 08:38 saw ahead a formation formed of 2 battleships, 5 destroyers and 1 boat. There began a signal exchange between one of the battleships and the *Eugenio*, until at 09:10 the Naval Force stopped to allow the trawler to cross over to the *Eugenio* and Capt. Brownrigg, Chief of the joint G.S. of Adm. Cunningham, accompanied by Leut. Seth-Smith and three signalers.

At 09:20 the training started in motion, following the English naval force at 20 knots, including BB *Warspite* and *Valiant* and the aforementioned minor ships. Destination Malta.

At 10:00, the TB *Libra* and *Orione* coming from the north, which, being short of naphtha, were started to Bona for refueling.

At 15:00 Adm. Cunningham, was silhouetted on a escort counter bearing of the formation, signaled to Adm. Oliva through the Capt. Brownrigg his regret for the loss of Roma. Adm. Oliva, by the same means, answered immediately thanking for the courteous message.

Subsequently Adm. Cunningham informed that Gen. Castellano, a member of the armistice commission, was in Biserta.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> the ships arrived at Malta, where they arrived, from Taranto, anchored in Madalena Bay, the ships *Duilio*, *Doria*, *Cadorna*, *Pompeo Magno*, *Da Recco*. At 09:00 the cruisers dropped anchor at Saint Paul Bay, except *Eugenio*, who entered the port of La Valletta at 09:50 with the two battleships of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division. Latter in the afternoon at 16:00 moved to Marsa Scirocco

Shortly there was present on the *Eugenio* a British captain, who read to the admiral a message from the Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean, Gen. Eisenhower, who expressed his appreciation for the loyalty with which the Italian Fleet had complied with the armistice clause, and deplored the German offensive attack with the consequent loss of Roma.

Immediately Adm. Oliva with the ships captain, and Captain Brownrigg with him went on the *Duilio*, to present himself to Adm. Da Zara, who was senior to him, and Adm. Da Zara was presented - after reading - Eisenhower's message.

In the afternoon Adm. Da Zara was invited by Adm. Cunningham to a meeting.

"A steamboat - the traditional steamship of the English, slow and stingy, with its good brass smokestack - leads me to the ground (quoting Da Zara).

"A convoy is coming. The roadstead in the harbor, which is like saying offshore, there are about fifty steamers, one aircraft carrier and two BB. *Valiant* and *Warspite* ...

"In port I'm moored with *Nelson*, *King George* and various cruisers.

"At the dock is the Chief of G.S. Adm. Cunningham and there is honor guard commanded by an officer. I'm going to pick up the picket, making a stack of a large array of photographers and movie reporters, and then a car takes me to Lascaris Barracks, the seat of the Headquarters.

"We cross La Valletta. Roads are here and there still cluttered with rubble and destructions appear to be many and large proportions.

"The offices of the Headquarters are all dug into the cave and to reach the headquarters of the Command we cross a long gallery, on which the office doors open. Adm. Cunningham receives me in a unadorned room with walls covered with great maps ...

Around the large rectangular table we sit, Adm. Cunningham, I, the two leaders of G.S. of the admiralty, the Admiral of Malta, the Chief of the G.S. of the Admiral Commander of the Fortress, who is currently in Taranto, my Chief of G.S. Capt. Frig. [Commander] Morabito and Ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Bacchetti.

"Adm. Cunningham takes the floor and reads Eisenhower's message to which he associates fully and adds the expression of his particular regret for the loss of the *Roma*.

"Thank you and I would like to make you interpret my thanks to Gen. Eisenhower for participating in the ceremony. As for the scrupulous execution of the armistice clauses, I tell him that the Navy did nothing but obey the orders of the King.

"This first part of the ceremony, Adm. Cunninzhams asks me if I am aware of the armistice clauses. I reply that I have only been informed by my Government that the clauses in question *do not* contemplate the lowering of the flag and the delivery of the ships.

"My polite reply in form, but in reserved tone, leaving the admiral a bit 'puzzled.. After a moment of indecision he turns to his boss of G.S. and then he gives me the rules of the armistice and invites me to get to know him.

"I read carefully, one by one the various clauses, and when I finished Adm. Cunningham speaking softly.

"He tells me first of all that it is not his intention to keep on board our ships the guard of English sailors and that, although he has not had instructions from his Government, he will give orders to be withdrawn.. He then goes on to spell out the rules to make the disarmament of the various ships practical. Short term, shutters, triggers, destruction charges will have to be landed at the ship's locations. They will be re-embarked upon transfer. Disarming the ships will be under the responsibility of the on-board commands. If it is deemed necessary, an English officer may occasionally carry out a check-up visit.

"All these requests are perfectly fair and I have nothing to argue. They also demonstrate an understanding and sense of trust that I did not expect.

"As soon as the issue is exhausted, the admiral informs me that it is his intention to move to Alexandria the ships of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, 4 cruisers and 6 destroyers.

"Ships should leave tomorrow in the afternoon together with the Squadron of the Adm. Bissit embarked on the *Howe* and I ask you to give the appropriate orders. Except for a liaison officer who will embark on the *Eugenio di Savoia*, no other English officer will sail on Italian ships.

"The interview is over. Through the tunnel's long passage, Cunningham re-engages me to the car and greets me with much courtesy of form...

"Stripped of the forms of a traditional label, the welcome was generally courteous and correct".

## 6<sup>th</sup> THE TRANSFER OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> DIVISION FROM TARANTO TO MALTA.

Adm. Da Zara, he returned to Taranto from the meeting in Rome toward 19:00, on September 8<sup>th</sup>, leaving immediately on board the *Duilio*, his flagship. The naval force he commanded, constituting a detachment of the Naval Battle Forces, consisted of:

- 5<sup>th</sup> Div.: *Duilio*, *Doria*;
- CL Group: *Cadorna* (R. Adm. Giovanni Galati), *Pompeo Magno*, *Scipio Africano*;
- DD *Da Recco* (joined on departure for Malta).

When the news of the armistice arrived, the men remained silent and disciplined, confident of the decisions their commanders would take.

For the next morning, September 9, Adm. Da Zara had summoned the commanders of his ships. While the meeting was underway, in which the commanders seemed inclined to sink the ships, came the unmistakable order to depart for Malta. Having clarified as a result of collation and repeat the indecipherable groups, the need to obey, instead of sinking the ships, began to emerge in the amazement of the sea. Da Zara, who also went to the Commander in Chief of the Department Adm. Bruto Brivonesi to be comforted of his opinion. The meeting was also attended by the Commander Military Maritime, Adm. Giuseppe Fioravanzo. Admiral Da Zara soon became convinced that the feeling, still prevalent among the commanders, of his own love and pride contrary to the departure for an English base, had prevailed that of obedience to the orders of the King and of the Government. What he convinced himself and that allowed him to induce all his dependents to overcome any doubt about the behavior to be taken, was the phrase "from the armistice clauses to the exclusion of ceding of the ships and lowering the flag" contained in the order of departure. Only Adm. Galati went ashore, not feeling the spirit of leaving even without surrendering the cruisers nor lowering the flag.

The Adm. Da Zara had decided to leave at 17:00. But when Marina Taranto informed him that it was in sight of the pre-announced Allied Fleet with a convoy, he made orders to hasten the start. The ships left the buoys in the Mar Grande in succession, beginning at 16:18 and 17:00, out of the anchorage, turned northwest to get out of the Gulf of Taranto along

the coastal security routes from Metaponto and Calabria. The English Naval Force was facing south, coming from the Puglia side of the Gulf.

The sailing was carried out without incident, except for the attack of 4 German fighter - bombers who dived on the *Duilio* at 18:56: a bomb fell 20 meters on the ship's starboard, which was making an emergency turn on the left, and another fell thirty seconds after 30 meters ahead. Then the aircraft flew away, followed by the A/A fire of all ships. At 06:45 on the 10<sup>th</sup> there was an English recon who followed the Naval Force.

At 09:30 sighted a British DD, who made the sign of recognition and set off ahead of our ships.

A formation of 8 English fighters overflew the formation at some point about noon.

At 16:25, eight British MTBs came alongside the ships and at 16:55 the DD was replaced by a pilot ship. Malta was in sight.

The ships stopped the engines in front of La Valetta. A Commander Duffy came aboard with three other officers and some armed sailors. The ships then went to anchor in Maddalena Bay. Adm. Da Zara wrote:

"The Commander had a letter written in Italian, signed by the Chief of G.S. Adm. Power the base commander of Malta (which, as you will see, was aboard the British ships heading to Taranto).

"The letter said:

"In accordance with the conditions of the Armistice, which was signed by our Governments, I have appointed Commander M.J. Ross, the official guardian of the ship you are commanding, and has received the order to take the following measures:

- a) Gun closure devices (except those of anti-aircraft guns) must be removed;
- b) all aircraft must be rendered ineffective;
- c) all the radio and radar apparatus must be put out of service;
- d) guard and security personnel will be posted on board.

"For the above I ask you to provide him with all the facilities and full assistance in carrying out his duties.

"The necessary supplies of food and oil will be provided to you on your request, which should be directed to the officer of the

guard. He will send the necessary signals to the Authorities on the ground. Signed Edwards”.

"I agree without questioning the various British demands and giving Commander Ross all the possible facilities so that he can put his mandate to execution.

"I am later informed that the measures taken have been reduced to a pure and simple formality”.

The first contact was later from the morning, Da Zara with Adm. Cunningham has already said.

The *Cesare*, belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, was detached in Pola, in the yard for small work and - as we have seen - at 09:00 on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Zara had ordered her to join the Division in Malta. Cap. di Freg. [Commander] Vittore Carminati commanded the ship.

She left Pola at 16:00, escorted by Torpedo Boat *Sagittarius* and Corv. *Urania*, with the order given by Marina Pola to sail to Cattaro to supply and receive further instructions for the continuation of the trip.

From the 07:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup> a German recon follows the ship. At 12:15 the *Cesare* saw the aircraft support ship *Miraglia*, who - coming from Venice - was also headed for Cattaro. This, who in turn caught sight of the *Cesare*, joined it together by forming a group whose command was assumed by cap. vasc. [Captain] Gaetano Correale, commander of the *Miraglia*.

Shortly after, Supermarina's order came to Taranto instead of Cattaro, which was confirmed by Marina Brindisi at 16:55. The group came to Taranto on the second day at 14:00

During the crossing, five German bombers had launched a bomb at 13:45 of the 10<sup>th</sup>, with particular focus on the *Cesare* without touching it. All the ships had intensely reacted with fire and maneuver, probably striking some aircraft. When the attack was over, other German reconnaissance followed them until sunset.

Before *Cesare's* meeting with the *Miraglia*, there had been a dissident episode of some officers with some non-commissioned officers who, in the ignorance of armistice clauses, believed that they had to deliver the ship to the British and wanted to divert it to the Italian coast to scuttle it. The commander learned of the grave fact and having in the meantime intercepted the subsequent clarifying communications of Supermarina, he gathered

on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> at 08:00 the crew read the communications received, commented on them and brought them back to the lane of disciplined obedience. The incident was judged with indulgence by the High Authorities of the Navy after extensive investigative examinations, given the praiseworthy nature of the sentiment that animated the dissident group.

From Taranto *Cesare* and *Miraglia* continued to Malta at 14:00 on the 12<sup>th</sup>, escorted by a Cant. Z 506 sub-hunter. At 07:25 on the 13<sup>th</sup> they encountered at Cape Passero, as expected, an English formation including the *Warspite* and 4 DD; they came to her and soon after midday on the same day they came to Malta.

## 7<sup>th</sup> THE SAVING OF THE SHIPWRECKED OF THE ROMA AND THE EVENTS OF THE SHIPS THAT PREFORMED IT.

### a) *The rescue operations.*

Just the 12<sup>th</sup> DD Squad. "Mitragliere", the *Regolo* and the "Pegaso" torpedo boat group received the order given by Adm. Oliva a little after 16:00 (see par. 5-d) to go to Roma's rescue, heading toward it, which was clearly visible for the high column of smoke that overwhelmed it.

The 12<sup>th</sup> squadron, which was immediately ahead of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, was the first to come to the point where *Roma* was about to sink: just as the *Attilio Regolo* arrived at the same time. These ships regained a total of 520 shipwrecks, in part seriously injured, including cap. vasc. [Captian] Adone del Cima Commander of the *Roma*, who died on the *Mitragliere*, so divided:

277 on the *Mitragliere*  
108 on the *Fuciliere*

112 on the *Carabiniere*  
23 on the *Regolo*

The "Pegaso" Torpedo Boat Group. (Cap. Freg. [Commander] Riccardo Imperiali), being back in the formation queue, was the last to arrive. The *Libra* (who had formally been joined to the group) and the *Orione*, for the malfunction of the engine, stayed behind and ended up losing contact with other ships in the group: *Pegaso*, *Orsa*, *Impetuouo*.

Thus, only these three ships carried out the rescue operations, stretching them until they were certain that there was no



no more man to save: all three retrieved 102 people.

In total, 1948 people embarked on the Roma had 1352 deaths, of which 1326 were at the time of the sinking and 26 of the 622 castaways recovered. Among the dead were all those who were part of the Naval Force Command. (Because they are closed in the command tower) and most of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the ship.

*b) The story of the "Mitragliere" group.*

At the end of the rescue operations, Commander Marini had lost sight of the Naval Force and knew only the following:

- ignorance of armistice clauses, but knowledge of directives given by Adm. Bergamini at the commander's meetings before departure;
- the intercepted signal of the Adm. Biancheri to Adm. Oliva, who proposed to return to La Spezia;
- the intercepted signal of the Adm. Oliva who ordered the Naval Force at 16:24 to turn westward;
- the finding that the Naval Force in retreat, he had to be under new attacks, given the violent anti-aircraft fire observable;
- no knowledge of the orders that the "Pegaso" group could have;
- doubt that La Maddalena was in German hands, taken from the message of Supermarina of 13:20 partially intercepted.

On 18:15, the command of all ships (1), called the "Pegaso" group, could not reach the *Regolo* and the 3 DD for the lower speed of the torpedo boats, and with the other four ships heading towards the north.

Failing to communicate with the *Eugenio* to receive orders, Commander Marini telegraphed with the main radio to the 7<sup>th</sup> Division

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(1) *Regolo's* commander was cap. freg. [Commander] Notarbartolo, but he was boarded as a captain of the light cruiser, cap. vasc. [Captain] Garofalo, senior to Marini. It was at 18:15 that the latter had come to know that at the departure from Genoa of the *Regolo*, cap. vasc. [Captain] Garofalo was not on board. In fact, he was on the *Italia*, because the *Regolo*, due to a malfunction, had departed with delay after the Naval Force was at sea, and the Adm. Bergamini had wanted cap. vasc. [Captain] Garofalo present at the sea from the first moment.

and at the Supermarina, at 18:54: "Ultimately recovering shipwrecks. 18:15 hours *Mitragliere*, *Regolo*, *Fuciliere* and *Carabiniere* direct 10° course, speed 22 from approximate position lat. 41° 26' long. 7° 48' [25 miles northwest of the northern extremity of Asinara]." This telegram was received at 18:58.

The chosen route led to the Upper Tyrrhenian Sea, based on the idea of landing the shipwrecked as soon as possible and the idea of reuniting with the Naval Force. Which - according to the proposal of Biancheri to Oliva - might have been in the direction of La Spezia.

Delaying to get instructions, Commander Marini at 19:20 insisted with a new telegram: "Purpose of unloading the ships and landing of the serious injuries, then I would head to Livorno". The "unloading of the ships" referred to the possibility of not congesting La Spezia with too many ships, in the hypothesis that is where the Fleet was directed.

Subsequently Commander Marini, realizing that serious incidents were taking place in the peninsula so as to hinder the free use of the radio links, he thought of going to Portoferraio; He communicated it at 21:30 to the other three commanders, asking for their opinion, which they agreed with.

Shortly thereafter, he intercepted a signal from Supermarina directed to the *Pegaso*, with the time protocol 192109, saying: "Germans are entering Rome stop Radio Station Sao Paulo occupied stop I foresee eventuality not being able to issue more commands stop. Milano". (These are the two sentences which, according to the *Scipione* report, concluded the long message that Supermarina had written at 20:25).

This interview was for Commander Marini the revealer of a very complex national situation, which made him very perplexed about the possibility of continuing to sail to an Italian port. He was ignorant of the clauses of the armistice and knew only, by the word of the Adm. Bergamini, that the ships should not be delivered to anyone: neither to the Germans nor to the English. Ignoring which of the two contenders he would find in the port of call in Italy, he decided to head to a neutral port and at 22:50 he made 28 knots to the Balearic Islands after consulting the other commanders by radio.

At 01:45 he deciphered a new dispatch of Supermarina, directed at the *Mitragliere* and *Regolo*, but it did not have the conventional word Milano: "National hospital ship direct Bona. Do not land Corsica or Sardinia and give news by telegraphing apart from the official names of the rescued. "The lack of the word "Milano" Commander Marini suspected that the dispatch was apocryphal,

he did not reply and went on to the Balearics, where at 28 knots he would arrive at dawn, safe from enemy air strikes.

During the night crossing, he was followed by reconnaissance, who at first glories of dawn recognized as English.

At 08:00 on September 10, the four ships commanded by capitano di vascello [Captain] Marini entered Port Mahon.

These four ships, plus five more of which will be said briefly, remained in Spain for 16 months and 5 days, that is until January 15, 1945, when they could leave the internment ports by going to Algiers, where they arrived on January 19, And then resume their position among the ships already cobelligerent for so long with the Allies in the war of liberation of the country.

The spiritual odyssey of men and the intricate political events that characterized the long internment until their departure would merit an entire volume alone: but each reader with his Italian sensitivity can well imagine what could have suffered a group of about 1300 Officers and sailors, detached from the homeland fight, in a forced idleness and without knowing when and when he could return to active life.

*c) The story of the Pegasus group,*

After the rescue of *Roma* personnel, lost sight of *Libra* and *Orione* (who, as we have said, went to Bona) lost the view of the Naval Force, received at 18:15 the liberty of maneuver by the Command 12<sup>th</sup> DD Squad. also presented to Commander Imperiali the problem of the direction to be taken and of the port where he approached the ship he had with him: *Pegaso*, *Impetuoso*, *Orsa*.

He received the dispatch of Supermarina of 19:21 (cited above) and intercepted radio news about the entry of German troops into all Italian ports of Tyrrhenian, he thought it was impossible to go to any of these ports where he would have to scuttle to prevent the torpedo boats falling into German hands.

In vain he asked for orders from Supermarina and 7<sup>th</sup> Division: No response came to him. This made him suppose that Supermarina was no longer able to give orders or that the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, with the Naval Force of which he had headed, no longer needed the cooperation of the *Pegaso* group or between Supermarina and Naval Force radio for him indecipherable. In any case, the Commander Imperiali decided to continue northwest, in the direction that he saw the Naval Force before the

he loss contact and then saw the Mitragliere group disappear”.

Along this route, between 19:00 and 20:00, the three torpedoes were insistently attacked by numerous German aircraft. Interestingly, the description of the attacks was made by Commander Imperiali:

"The ships of the group maneuver unhindered and perform an intense contrasting fire. Many bombs dropped close to the ships and in particular some gliders - a rocket that was detonated by planes at an altitude of 3000 meters and that they were diving on the ships ... these rocket bombs were of extraordinary precision and fell a few yards from the ships, despite the maneuvering at maximum speed and with all the steering ...

"It was appreciated that three planes were killed between *Pegaso* and *Impetuoso* during the combat; The commandant of *Orsa* says he has killed two more.

"Gliders - rocket; which we saw employed for the first time, were slightly smaller than a fighter aircraft ... they maneuvered to follow the target. At first I believed that they were fighter planes, who wanted to strafe, but then every doubt was eliminated ...

"At the same time as this new form of bombardment we were attacked by fighters and by bombers ... ".

The *Orsa* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Gino del Pin) at 20:30 went off to the Balearics because - verified, with the remaining oil - found that no other safe harbor could be reached: he dropped anchor at 10:23 the following morning, September 10, In the bay of Pollensa (Mallorca) near Formentor island, after informing Supermarina at 08:49 of the decision taken, stating the reason.

At 01:30 Commander Imperiali, also heard the opinion of the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Cigala Fulgosi, commander of the *Impetuoso*, decided to head for the Balearics, for having also intercepted Cunningham's message which he had interpreted as an invitation to surrender the ships.

In the meantime, he had repeatedly called the 7<sup>th</sup> Division for orders and to the Supermarina without any response.

At 07:37 he received from Supermarina the request to give news: this made him realize that his telegrams had not been received. Without holding the message the word Milano, he replied evasively at 07:50. "I am with *Impetuoso*, I beg you to give orders“. Finally at 08.37, came from Supermarina an order that had crossed

with the message of the *Pegaso* of 07:50 now quoted, because it had the same time of compilation: "With shipwrecked head Bona where you will find Italian hospital ship stop Arrive in daytime stop. Milano".

He was now in the territorial waters of the Balearic Islands and agreed with Cigala Fulgosi to go to Pollensa, where he arrived at 11:15. He immediately summoned the commandant of the *Orsa*, who told him that he was waiting for the answer to his request for oil and water to continue.

Meanwhile, he also intercepted a circular telegram of Supermarina, completed at 10:00, which ordered all ships not to land in Genoa, Civitavecchia, Livorno, Maddalena, Toulon because they were occupied by the Germans.

To the Spanish authorities, the Commander Imperiali asked for hospitalization of the wounded, landing of the shipwreck and permission to stay 24 hours in labor. Exaggerated the number of those who needed to land in order to mix crew members and simplify the problems of scuttling. Given the importance of this decision, agreed by the two commanders of *Pegaso* and the *Impetuoso*, it is better to return the words of the Commander Imperiali:

"The problem of *Orsa* was easier, as there was a need for refueling: we were told that such a request could hardly be met and consequently it was possible for the *Orsa* to stay in port without being interned and earning it time. The case of *Pegaso* and of the *Impetuoso* was to be resolved within 24 hours.

"With Commander Cigala, we look at the possibilities for a long time, which reduced to the following:

1<sup>st</sup> to consider the order of directing Bona and surrendering to the English [he did not know of the clause no to deliver the ships and the lowering of the flag];

2<sup>nd</sup> to return to an Italian port occupied by the Germans;

3<sup>rd</sup> intern the ships;

4<sup>th</sup> scuttle the ships.

"As I pointed out above, the authenticity of the telegram of Supermarina received at 08:37 was questionable after the news of the previous evening (telegram of 19:21) informing of the German conquest of Radio San Paolo ...

"I have already mentioned before we were convinced that the Spanish political and military situation was too weak to allow

this government with a policy of absolute neutrality: sooner or later Spain would give up to diplomatic pressure and our ships would be delivered to either of the belligerents.

“We resolved not to give the enemy our ships and our crews who had up to that time honored Italy and the Navy, and concluded that we could not choose any other honorable route besides that of sinking them.

“However, it remained the doubt that this gesture could somehow damage our government's policy and the armistice clauses we had no knowledge. It was therefore necessary to give our gesture an official dress that could be sufficient to justify it. So we exaggerated the small failures reported in the air - naval combat until they become such that they do not allow us to continue for the mission ordered [that is, to go to Bona.] We compiled this to the telegram I sent at 05:03 of the 11<sup>th</sup>, shortly before the Order to sink the ships”.

The telegram, directed to Supermarina, said: “because of serious damage caused by combat and given sighting *Pegaso* and *Impetuoso* misses impossible to pursue missions scuttling territorial waters Majorca at 05:00 of the 11<sup>th</sup> stop shipwrecked heading Pollensa”. It does not appear from the documentation that this communication was received.

The two torpedoes arrived at 03:00 in the morning after having abandoned all but the minimum of crew needed for the short sailing, and reaching a depth of more than 100 meters, scuttled: those who remained aboard reached the land with the boats.

The decision of the two commanders was in accordance with the laws of the military honor and as judged in the course of the investigation by the Navy Authorities: in the absence of certain instructions, they had chosen the most honorable solution by winning the sense of despair, which pervades a seaman when he has to sacrifice his ship.

*Orsa* remained instead in Pollensa, was interned, moved to the dependence of the “Mitragliere” group and reached Algiers with it.

Before moving on to another subject, it should be briefly said of the Confessor (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Ravera) who, while joining the “Pegaso” group, did not leave La Spezia together with them.

The *Ardimentoso* had arrived in La Spezia at 10:30 on the 8<sup>th</sup> from Marina di Carrara and the commander was immediately presented to

Command in Chief of the Department to request the immediate entry into the arsenal of the ship, which after six months of continuous activity had, among other things, one of the two inoperable engines for heavy steam leakage to a maneuvering valve. As soon as he returned on board, Commander Ravera immediately began disembarking the naphtha and dismantling the valve, having had an order to enter the basin the next morning.

Just heard the announcement of the armistice. The oil was re-embarked and the repair of the valve was best attempted. No order was received on board because the radio signal was suspended. On the other hand, the Commander Imperiali did not think of calling Commander Ravera, and they believed that he had to receive new orders from the Commander of the Department, to where he was present.

As a result of these misunderstandings, the *Ardimentoso* did not leave together with other torpedoes: with one engine only, the torpedo could not in any case follow the Naval Force. But Commander Ravera judged it necessary to leave La Spezia and leave at 08:00 on 9 September for La Maddalena. Intercepted the message of Supermarina of the 13:20, which reported the occupation of Maddalena by the Germans and ordered the unarmed torpedo of the Naval Battle Forces to go to Portoferraio, headed for this location which he reached at 17:50. After repairing the valve, he resumed at 10:26 of the 11<sup>th</sup> together with the "Aliseo" group, with whom he arrived in Palermo at 10:00 of the 12<sup>th</sup>, as will be seen later.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> LOSS OF THE DD Vivaldi And Da Noli (Chart 2).

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, as has been seen, Supermarina had ordered that these two DD (ships belonging to the 16<sup>th</sup> DD Squad.) to travel to Civitavecchia waiting to embark on important persons. *Vivaldi* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Francesco Camicia) was at Genoa to start 10 days of work; *Da Noli* (cap. freg. [Comander] Pio Valdambrini) was in La Spezia.

At the 18:00 meeting in Rome on 8 September, Adm. Bergamini had confirmed to Commander Valdambrini the order to depart for Civitavecchia and by means of Adm. Biancheri (who was in Genoa with the 8<sup>th</sup> Division) had confirmed it to the *Vivaldi*.

At 23:15 on September 8, the two DD gathered little south of La Spezia and went on together to Civitavecchia. The *Vivaldi* was in reduced efficiency: among other things, the dynamo powered by the Diesel engines was out of service.

During the crossing the DD received from Supermarina, on the day of 9 September, the following orders:

- at 07:41 to head for La Maddalena;
- at 10:38 to join the Battle Fleet;
- at 14:14 to continue for Bona, possibly joining the Battle Fleet;
- at 14:33 leaving the La Maddalena estuary to the west, sinking during the passage all the German vessels that were trafficked between Sardinia and Corsica (to transfer to Corsica, as will be seen, the Germanic troops that were in Sardinia). (1)

The squadron commander (cap. vasc. [Captain] Camicia) having intercepted the news - at 13:00 from the Cov. *Danaide* to Supermarina - of the German occupation of La Maddalena, found this latter order logical.

As soon as it was deciphered, the two DD turned for the Boulevas of Bonifacio. Towards the end of 16:00, they met the Cov. *Danaide* (on which was embarked cap. freg. [Commander] Corvetti, Commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Anti-Sub Group headquartered in La Maddalena) and the *Minerva*, who was moving from La Maddalena to Portoferraio, where they arrived in the evening at 22:40, and which confirmed the German occupation of La Maddalena.

At 16:20, sailing at 23 knots with three boilers running of four, the two DD took the Bonifacio Bouches (see Chart 2) by following the safety routes and having the crew at their battle stations.

Shortly before crossing Razzoli, - Commander Camicia wrote - there are two boats sailing together directed to Corsica.

"At 16:50, when at a distance of 8 to 9000 meters, I open the fire on the left with the three 120 mm mounts on these boats, which are a motosilurante [MTB] and a motozattera [Landing Craft]. The shot from

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(1) At 13:00 while they were in route for La Maddalena, the DD had seen some high-altitude aircraft and shortly after they saw in the water, close enough, explosions like bombs or mines, as well as columns of water like Small caliber shells; But they had not heard the hiss of bombs or had seen where they were shooting in their direction.



third salvo onwards perfectly startles the targets. After the eighth salvo in the area you see only the rafting motion, which has reversed the course, is listing and smoking.

Suspending the fire. There are several low-flying aircraft along the coasts of Corsica; They kept out of the reach of our machine guns.

"At 17.00 fire is opened with the three 120 mm mounts and with the machine gunner in the field on a sailboat and then on two motozattera [Landing Craft], which are seen under the coast of Corsica. The shot is very well centered since the first salvo; the two motozattera seem to be both heavily affected.

"Violent reaction by the ships against which it is fired and by some batteries located on the southern coast of Corsica, which at first can not detect.

"Increase the speed at 25 knots and try to keep me off the coast, as far as it allows the position of the mines; when both of the motozattere went off astern, I open the fire against the ground battery that I could locate.

"The ship is hit by gunshots and firing. Small caliber at the stern; Different personnel, especially weapons of the two after machine guns, are put out of combat.

"At 17:15 small shots arrive at boiler n. 1 and in the shield of the workpiece, causing fire and unused boiler n. 1 with strong steam leakage and unnecessary turbulence, as well as the unusable of the 120 mount with many dead and injured. [The ship remains without electricity, as the Diesel - dynamo - as said – is out of service].

"Gave the order to turn on boiler n. 4.

"The ship reduces speed and shortly after boiler n. 2 must be turned off because of the impossibility of the staff to stay in the room. Given the large increase in temperature caused by the fire in boiler n. 1 and since the fans suck all the smoke and gas caused by the fire under the forecastle.

"Projectiles of 88 mm. hit the ship just above the waterline at the bow... causing fire.

"Even boiler n. 3 will be switched off, having received a shot in the oil tank on the right side. The oil was partially scattered in the boiler room, causing a fire principle almost immediately tamed. The hit has also caused damaged to the auxiliary feeding tubes of said boiler.

"At 17:30 the ship has stopped engines for lack of steam and is still under the fire of one of the coastline batteries.

By taking advantage of the little headway remaining, I turn in to the wind, which in the moment lightens from the second quadrant, covering me to Corsica with chlorhydrite fog and the dense smoke of the boiler on fire.

"Meanwhile, *Da Noli*, who took part in the shooting of ships and batteries on the side of Corsica [while he had not seen the first two ships on the other side and therefore did not fire], he also seems to have been hit; he moves away from the coast, speeds me south-west and makes a lot of smoke.

"At 17:50 a large whitewash pool, like a mines explosion, wraps the *Da Noli* that broke into two in the center sinking.

"You see a lot of people in the sea and shortly afterwards a motor launch running near the life rafts.

"Having the main radio unusable, I send to Supermarina with a radio signal (powered by spare batteries) and to the Squadron the sinking and position of *Da Noli* and the position and the failures of the *Vivaldi*.

"Every lightening of the fog and the smoke that surrounds us begins shooting with the stern and center mounts against the ground battery.

"Many shells come close to us and their shards cause more injuries and other deaths on board, including sottoten. vasc. [Ensign or Lieutenant (jg)] Caterini ...

"The temperature below the forecandle is suffocating: ... in the boiler. n. 1 the fire continues to rage.

"I authorize the opening of the flooding in the ammo storage depot; not working the flooding maneuver and given the continuous rise in temperature, the gunnery officer will flood the deposit.

"At 18:10 after about 20 minutes of being stopped (while the boiler 4 is switched on), boiler n. 3, which still had a residual pressure of some Kg/cm<sup>2</sup>. Suppose, with accumulators remaining efficient, at the risk of the safety circuits. The fire below the forecandle is decreasing. It is commanded to suspend any flooding of the ammo deposit.

"I assume west-south west route to get the ship out of reach of the coastal batteries as while preparing to light the flame".

The *Da Noli* had had two hits on board before sinking on a mine, one on the waterline and one under the forecandle. No man was hurt and the bump

against the mines it happened while the aft waterway was stuck. Commander Valdambrini died with much of the crew who was with him on the bridge.

About the number and kind of German ships spotted and hit, there are many divergences in the interrogation of the surviving staff of the two DD: both DD believed they had struck various ships and perhaps sunk some. It was then that none of them was hit, however startled by the shooting of the two Italian ships.

We are now resuming the narrative of the *Vivaldi* affair, which was sunk by her crew at 11:30 on the 10<sup>th</sup> because of the impossibility to continue sailing to the Balearic Islands. It was about 50 miles west of Asinara.

At 18:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Vivaldi* took 250° course, towards Menorca at speeds of about 10 knots with a boiler running. The condition of the ship was rather serious; but she could have faced the situation, as long as a boiler operated.

At 19:15 he saw the "12<sup>th</sup> DD Squad. - *Regolo*" group in the mist to Asinara, with whom he had an exchange of signals, which - for a set of miscommunication and misunderstandings - did not obtain the requested assistance of for it was difficult for them to do so, or to bring aid to *Da Noli's* shipwrecks, to which *Vivaldi* could not provide, due to its precarious conditions, in mined waters and framed by German artillery. (1)

The *Pegaso*, who had ordered the *Mitragliere* to go to help the *Da Noli's* shipwrecked, had to give up for the air strikes that had happened in the night: he thought he could arrange for the *Vivaldi*, of which ignored the precarious conditions having seen him navigate to the west.

Between 19:00 and 20:00 *Vivaldi* was over flown by the aircraft attacking the "*Pegaso*" group, just northward from the DD. On every overnight flight, the DD fired heavily with the anti-aircraft arms, keeping the attacks away until at 20:00 an isolated aircraft launched a bomb so close that the air movement caused the some twenty people to fall overboard

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(1) Miscommunication and misunderstandings have been thoroughly investigated by a Commission of Inquiry, which has led to the dismissal of all charges for all ships involved in the complex and painful affair.

with the launch a Carley raft, and that the shock broke some piping and put some valves together. As a result, boiler n. 3 feed pumps stopped, which had to be shut down.

The rest of the crossing until 05:30 (10th September) was an alternation of hopes and disappointments about the possibility of continuing on the route.

At 05:30 the commander, with the ship immobilized, ordered the preparations for her abandonment and sinking. The motorboat, the lifeboat, the launch, six small Carley and one big, three pneumatic rafts, six wooden rafters, and four improvised rafts with available timber were put into the sea: the whole was enough for the 240 men who had remained alive on board of the 280 at the time of departure from Genoa (a forty were the sum of the deaths in combat and the drowning in the water for the explosion of the air bomb).

As mentioned, at 11:30 - after having repeatedly sent the "rescue tone" by radio pointing to the position - the *Vivaldi* disappeared, pushing the bow into the water.

The commander, abandoned to swim the ship last, took a seat on the boat that he considered to be the most practical means of being able to quickly move to the area and supervise the convoy made by him, putting the lifeboat at the head with various rafts and lifeboats in a single row tailing.

Shortly before the ship's total abandonment of the crew, a German airplane had flown at a low altitude and then moved away eastward.

"It has been lost even though it has two boilers, engines and machinery that are still in a state of operation, *for the absolute impossibility of supplying boilers to both oil and water*".

It is superfluous to say that "the behavior of the crew, both during combat and in the successive events that preceded and followed the sinking, as well as during the abandonment of the ship, was disciplined and superior to any praise".

It should be remembered the bright episode of capitano di corvetta [Commander] Alessandro Cavriani and of the chief engineer Virgilio Fasan, who abandoned the boat on which they were already seated, swimming to the ship despite the commander's remarks to make it safer and faster sinking. "The castaways, who followed the sinking of the ship, reappeared on the forecastle in imminence

of the sinking, rights in the greetings to the flag to which they offered the holocaust of a noble existence that they wanted to tie to the fate of the ship" is said in the motivation of the gold medal for military valor given to the memory of both.

The convoy of floats started towards Sardinia, which was much closer than the Balearics, while Commander Camicia was worried better to distribute men and supplies of food and water among the various means. The sea was calm and there was no breath of wind.

Navigation, which began under favorable conditions, continued with growing difficulties so as to become a real odyssey.

Commander Camicia recounts:

"15:00 hours on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A German seaplane boat alights about 3000 meters away. I send the motorboat alongside with the order to transship the wounded. The hydro, after having taken aboard about 20 people, mostly wounded ... takes off and goes northwest.

"17:00 hours on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Three other three German three engine seaplane are nearby ...

"17:50 hours of the 10<sup>th</sup>. While transshipment operations are still in progress, shipwrecks arrive in the area of an American four engine aircraft, running low-speed, and then starting machine guns for German aircraft trying to take off and react with weapons onboard. The German planes are burned.

"All those who can be thrown into the sea and are picked up by our boats and the rafts of the seaplane, while the American plane moves away.

"About 20 of ours, including several wounded, are no longer found; the German crews have no losses,

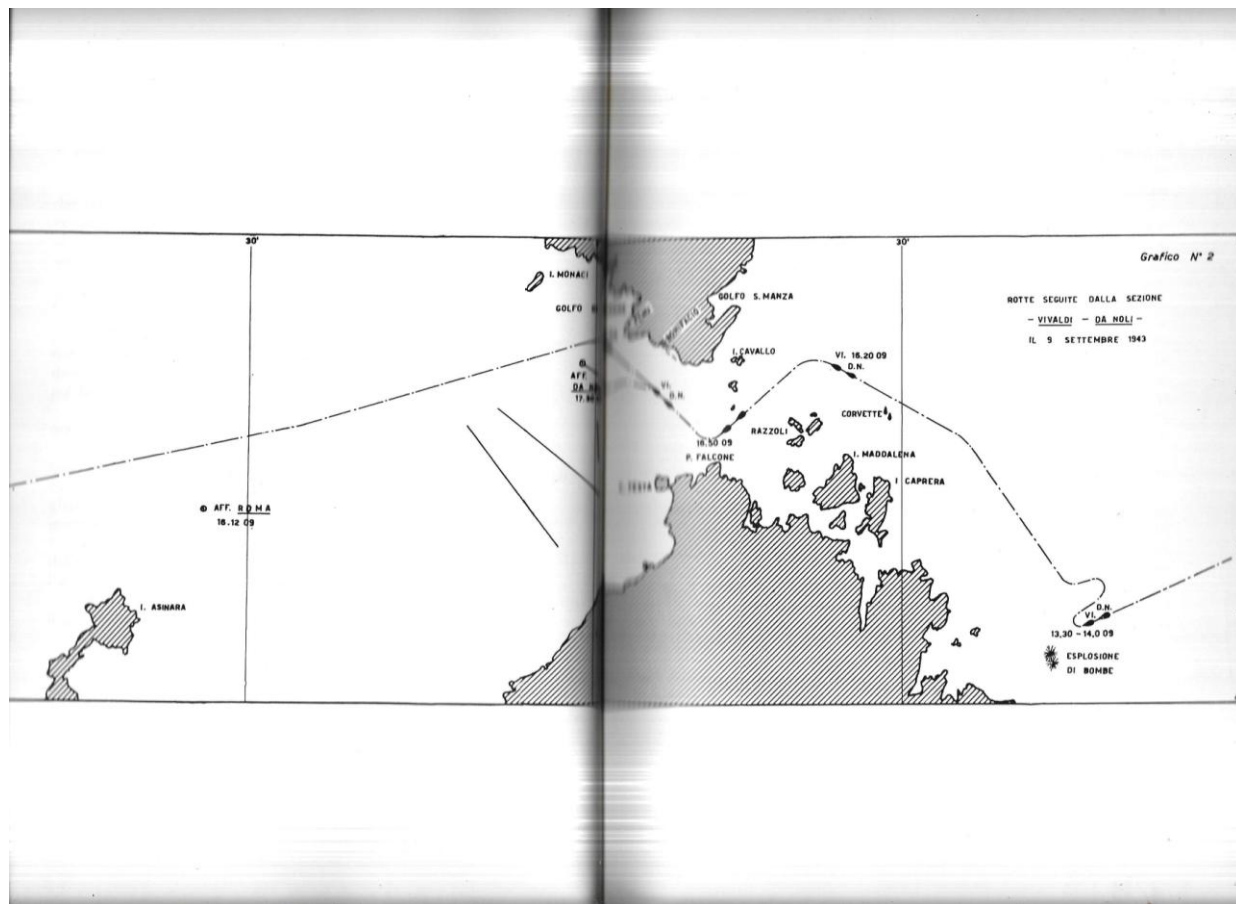
"18:30 hours. A American flying boat and later two British fighters arrive and fly over the area at low altitudes. The American flying boat is far away from the rafts and retrieves two of our shipwrecks we could not locate ...

"01:20 hours of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Towards the east is seen a white light as a small projector approaching. It turns out to be a German landing craft that comes to stop with us. It loads all German aviators and about 40 of our wounded and ill ... The aviators tell me they would do all they could to complete the rescue... "

After the departure of the landing craft there were 142 people on the floats. Navigation began to become difficult

## The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

Chart n.2



for the rising wind and rising sea, with frequent tugging of tow cables.

The 12<sup>th</sup> towards midday, in the face of the wind and sea violence (Force 5) that made it nearly impossible to progress, the commander reversed the course to all the floats and raised improvised sails to run with the sea in the stern and to save the residual engine of the motorboat.

With the progress of the worsening of weather, with gusts and rains coming down, the convoy ended up dispersing until Commander Camicia found himself - despite his efforts to avoid dispersion - on the towing tender of the motorboat with a little compass, which had recovered on a raft of German flying boat he could head northwest, that is to Spain, with 50 people alongside him. By noon on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the wind calmed, but the sea still agitated advised to abandon the boat, whose tow continued to break frequently. The motorboat engine started, the boat landed at 23:30 of the 17<sup>th</sup> on the beach of the village of Blanes, 60 kilometers northeast of Barcelona. Three people died during the last transitional period, very painful for lack of water.

As soon as he got to the ground, Commander Camicia was concerned about the Spanish authorities for aerial searches for the rafts.

At 05:50 on the 18<sup>th</sup> arrived 30 kilometers northeast, at Palamos just south of Capo San Sebastiano the lifeboat with 35 men on board, including sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Oddone.

Finally, on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Commander Camicia's group was transported to Barcelona by the Spanish gunboat *Dato*: on board he found sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Oddone' group.

The other groups of men, scattered around the various floats, had the following fate:

- those recovered the 15<sup>th</sup> from German hydro (21 men) were transported to Marignan in Provence;
- another German hydro recovered shortly after two shipwrecks on an isolated raft;
- The two saved by the American hydro at 18:30 were transported to Algeria;
- 47 people, rescued from the German landing craft, were landed to Saint Raphael at 12:30 on the 11<sup>th</sup>;
- a group of shipwrecked was taken aboard by the English submarine *Sportman* in the night of 11 September and landed in Algiers, on the 28<sup>th</sup>, departing for Malta on the DD *Legionnaires* and *Oriani*. The DD

*Riboty* took on board these survivors and landed them in Taranto on September 30;

- Finally, a group of 7 sailors was picked up on the 15<sup>th</sup> by the Italian motozattera n. 780, who landed at Port Mahon.

In total, *Vivaldi* lost 60 men, including 2 officers and 4 non-commissioned officers.

As for the crew of the *Da Noli*, sunk in a few moments just off the coast of Corsica, the rapidity of the catastrophe caused the loss of 228 people, including 8 officers and 22 non-commissioned officers, of the 267 on board the destroyer on departure from La Spezia.

The 39 survivors reached, after many hardships, the nearby coast, hampered by the east wind that blew in the Bocche di Bonifacio. The most conspicuous group, composed of 15 people, was the first to land on the rescue launch at 17.00 on the 10<sup>th</sup> near Cape Senetose in Corsica: it was with it cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Danilo Silvestri, 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of the DD, who picked up 14 survivors that could reach rowing hard against the wind, until the darkness prevented him from pursuing the search. The others scattered over the rafts came to coast in the next two or three days, including a group of four survivors recovered from a motor boat on the 13:00 of the 11<sup>th</sup> and brought to one of the Sanguinary Islands, located on the north side of Bay of Aiaccio. Commander Silvestri, as soon as he reached the ground, worried about the Bonifacio Naval Command organizing the searches, which was carried out by a rescue aircraft with a negative result.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> THE EVENTS OF MOTOZATTERE 778, 780 AND 800.

Connected with the events of the "Mitragliere" group, because they also went to the Balearics, they were the events of these three motozattere [Landing Craft]. But in order not to have to come back to the subject, we will also talk about the fate of all the motozattere that - with the command of cap. freg. [Commander] Manlio Lazzeri - made up the flotilla of the Upper Tyrrhenian.

The Flotilla Command resided in Forte dei Marmi in a requisitioned hotel, and the total number of men employed by it was around 1420, of which 120 officers. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, at the headquarters of the Command were 75 officers (of whom, 36 followed a course of



Command of the motozattere) and 550 soldiers of C.R.E.M., of which about 300 were survivors of motozattere sunk or damaged,

Commander Lazzeri, at 08:30 on September 9<sup>th</sup>, could dial by telephone with the Department of La Spezia command and commanded him to "send to La Maddalena the boats capable of moving and sinking immobilized boats in port." Immediately he provided the following arrangements, overcoming various difficulties of connection.

As far as the unembarked crew present at Forte dei Marmi (plus the one of the five motozattere in Viareggio who was scuttled because they were not in the conditions of leaving), he was able to call again at La Spezia at 10:00 and talk to the Chief of the G.S. Cap. vasc. [Captain] Bacigalupi, who told him that in the case of German attack, he had to avoid any incident, leaving disarming without resistance.

Commander Lazzeri had only about thirty rifles and a handful of hand bombs, which he had distributed on the evening before, reinforcing the guard posts and the picket.

Urged by the German Command that on 09:00 who had invaded Forte dei Marmi by numerous troops with two heavy tanks, he executed the orders by sent the 10<sup>th</sup> to all personnel the "unlimited license awaiting orders ministries orders" after he had animated with an appropriate vibrant speech, having distributed all available money, and having destroyed every secret document. He decided to stay in order to share the fate of his people on the ground instead of leaving with one of the motozattere, where he would go together with the embarked to meet a more certain and immediate freedom.

The motozattere were so located:

- in Genoa: Mz 759 and 760 (they were in great work at the Ansaldo yard and were captured by the Germans);
- in La Spezia: Mz 736 and 748 (they were in the basin and were sabotaged by scuttling);
- at Mouth of Magra: Mz 703, 709, 742, 778, 780, 781 (they were in small works and all departed);
- at Marina di Carrara: Mz 749 and 800 (both departed);
- in Viareggio: Mz 706, 744, 751, 754, 799 (they were in great works and were all scuttled);
- in Livorno: Mz 783 (it was in great jobs with few men in custody and was in all probability captured by the Germans).

The motozattere of Bocca di Magra departed at 08:00 of September 9, directed to La Maddalena, at the command of the lieutenant of C.R.E.M. c. Favaretti embarked on Mz 703. Almost at the same time they left Marina di Carrara under the command of the sottotenente di vasc. c. [Ensign] Pesci with the Mz 749 and 800.

The sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Pesci, which was on the 749, departed to see to the south six motozattere now called and decided to join them, both to connect with the parent company ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Picella (who could not leave because he was delayed by a German unit while at Forte dei Marmi was going to Bocca di Magra, had come too late to embark), both because of the malfunctioning of the compasses of his two motozattere.

After the meeting, as the senior of the commanders took the direction of the sailing, he had an order to make a route to Portoferraio, and to this place he led the group of eight motozattere.

Given the different state of efficiency of the various units, the group split into two parts: the three fast-moving motozattere (Mz 703, 709, 749) continued their formation, progressively spacing from the other five less fast.

The small group had little luck: the three motozattere crossed Livorno off into two German ships (the minelayers *Pommern* and *Brandenburg*), who opened fire on the motozattere at 15:50. After 4 salvos, they ceased shooting, turning their attention to an Italian steamer sailing under the shore that had already fired (it was *Buffoluta*, as you will see).

The motozattere came right to the west to get away and then resumed the route to Portoferraio. Shortly afterwards, they saw near Gorgona the six motosiluranti [MTBs], soon recognized by Germans, who were overwhelming 3 Italian VASs (they were 238, 239 and 305, at the command of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Enrico Varoli Piazza, who was the commander of the VAS group in the formation). The sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Pesci immediately headed toward them in generous, in vain, trying to give some help. In short, the 3 VASs and the 3 motosiluranti were captured by the German ships (which, according to the report of the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Varoli, were 5 and not 6) and escorted to the port of Livorno.

He asked for orders from the commander Varoli, who told him to land the crew and start the members to their homes, so he did, after distributing the existing money on board.

Likewise, it happened on the other two motozattere, but one (703 commanded by Favaretti) could be sunk by the crew before being abandoned.

The other five starships (742, 778, 780, 781, 800) remained under the command of the sottoten. Vasc. C. [Ensign] Suttora of the 781 after the 703 had left, they had a very different fate.

By sailing at about 6 knots, they arrived on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> at Capraia, where they stopped for the adverse weather until 11am on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

From Capraia, calling for telephone orders at the Naval Command of Portoferraio, arrived at this location at 15:30 on the same day.

Supplied with fuel and food, they returned immediately to Capraia, arriving at 02:30 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It was their intention to wait for the events to develop in a quiet place, then to decide appropriately.

Towards noon they received a phonogram from Portoferraio Naval, saying "except for cases of absolute necessity, no Italian ship must head to Portoferraio,

" Sensing something serious," he wrote to g.m. [Midshipman] Protti Commander of the 778 - had to follow to Elba and thinking that Capraia has become a insecure shelter, given advice with the commanders of the other motozattere, shows the intention to take the ships to a neutral harbor so that they can preserve them for Italy. Collecting two ships in better navigability, Mz 778 and 800, he decide to go to Spain with only the crews who voluntarily prefer the route of the hinterland to any other. Embark on my ship sottoten. Vasc. Suttora left [died of illness before he could relate his work], who assumed the command of the group [of the two departing motozattere].

"At 18:30 on September 12<sup>th</sup>, Capraia is sailing north of Cape Corso, which is rounded in the night. It is then headed for the Balearic Islands. In the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> wind and strong sea; Aboard the 778 increase the infiltrations in the left hold, which force at 16:00 of the 14<sup>th</sup> to stop the engine and to put the bow to the wind to start the pumps. At 16:00 on the 14<sup>th</sup> there is the island of Minorca; Paused with Mz 800 in an island cove until 22:00, then started navigation to Barcelona. entering the harbor at 17:00 on September 15<sup>th</sup>".

Thus Capraia stayed with the Mz 742, 780, 781. The Mz 742, due to its precarious conditions, ought to have been sunk according to

the unanimous opinion of the crew; but then - as a result of the insistence of the crew - it was brought to strand, it is noteworthy that his commander g.m.c. [Midshipman (res)] Poletti started with the motozattere section 778-800. Also the 781, which had a defect at the helm which could not be repaired by the means of board, was stranded and so remained until the end of the war.

Mz 742, on the initiative of boatswain 2<sup>nd</sup> helmsmen Giuseppe Candido, was refloated with a feverish work completed at 04:30 on the 13<sup>th</sup>. In the evening he took her to the port of Capraia. The 16<sup>th</sup> went out to save two British shipwrecked officers, discovered by the semaphore. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, he received the order to disarm the shipwreck, deliver the weapons to the local carabinieri [police] and present himself with all the crew to the German Command of Portoferraio.

Instead, he decided to leave for a port controlled by the Allies; At 05:00 on September 19<sup>th</sup> he arrived in Montecristo, where he went on to Ponza, which was reached at 13:00 on the 20<sup>th</sup>; during the sailing he had rejected the 76/40 cannon and with two machine guns an attack of two German aircraft.

In Ponza he handed the English officers to an American MTB, who told him to wait until his return at Ponza until the next day: he would return to escort the Mz 742 to Capri. After a vain 4-day wait, helmsman Candido left for Ventotene and on September 25 - authorized by the Americans - he left again, coming to Capri the same day.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> helmsman Candido, for the character of the skill and the technical-professional skill demonstrated, had the solemn praise from the Minister of the Navy.

The Mz 780, driven by the aspirant g.m. c. [Midshipman (res)] Fappiano departed with a crew adhering to his decision for the Balearics at 22:00 on September 14, in order to get them there to continue to Algiers and then to reach Sicily.

During sailing, at 15:00 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, he recovered 7 *Vivaldi* shipwrecked (as already said) and landed at Port Mahon at 14:00 on the 16<sup>th</sup>; he had two of the three engines in trouble and had consumed all the oil and water.

The three Mz 778, 780 and 800 then reached Algiers with the "Mitragliere" group in January 1945. (1)

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(1) The "Mitragliere" group had also been joined by the rescue motorboat *Rama* of the Air Force, which also sailed to Port Mahon, coming from Sardinia. The *Rama* left for Algiers with the other naval ships.

## THE 10<sup>th</sup> TORPEDO DIVISION.

At 21:00 on September 8, Adm. of the Div. Nomis di Pollone left Rome, arriving at La Spezia at 08:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup> to direct the command of all the torpedoes [Torpedo Boats and sometimes Destroyers] present in the theater of the Upper Tyrrhenian, as by orders given to him by Adm. of the Sqdn. Somigli (V. par. 2<sup>nd</sup>) (1).

He immediately appeared to the Commander in Chief of the Department (Adm. Squad. Maraghini), from whom he learned that the order had been made to apply the *Memorandum* n. 1 of the Supreme Command.

As a result, some of the torpedoes departed with the Battle Fleet; some had already sailed in isolation or in a group for La Maddalena, while the *Indomito* and the *Impavido* were going to Lerici at disposal of Adm. Squad. Aimone di Savoia, Inspector General of the Mas; Five inefficient Torpedo Boats (*Lira*, *Ghibli*, *Proclone*, *Montanari*, *Cascino*) were scuttled.

As German units were marching toward La Spezia, Admiral Nomis - without putting time in between - went to Prince Aimone, who had received the order from the King before the evening to reach him in the fastest way. Given the uncertainty of the situation along the La Spezia - Rome highway, the prince decided to embark with Adm. Nomis on the *Indomito*.

At 10:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the two Torpedo Boats left Lerici at about 12 knots, having the *Impavido* boilers in bad condition. They arrived at Portoferraio in the evening at 19:00, after joining the TB *Ariete* and *Animos* from Genoa during the crossing and receiving from Supermarina the arrangement to stop at Elba, as La Maddalena fell into the hands of the Germans.

In Portoferraio Adm. Nomis found Supermarina's order to assume supreme command of all the ships that were flowing there and to take measures to prevent German landings on the island, whose base commander was the cap. vasc. [Captain] Michelangelo Fedeli.

In the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup> a new telegram from Supermarina ordered him to leave for Palermo with all the ships in Portoferraio, starting to Salerno those who had not had enough autonomy; The telegram also contained instructions,

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(1) Adm. Nomis was the Superior Commander of the Torpedoes, with inspection and operational functions. He usually resided in Rome, headquarters of the Chief of Traffic Protection Naval Command.

common to all ships, concerning the recognition marks and the 'non - delivery' arrangements with the Allies.

As a consequence the Adm. Nomis, who had already assembled the commanders to illustrate the situation and make the appropriate guidelines in the hypothesis that the ships remained in Portoferraio, purposed all depart the following morning.

At the start he went aboard the TB *Aliseo* (cap. freg. [Comander] Fecia di Cossato) with Prince Aimone, leaving for Portoferraio, because they were unable to continue, the two TB *Ardito* and *Impavido* and some smaller ships, both military and requisitioned merchantmen, with the order they depart as soon as possible.

Ultimately, he arrived in Palermo on 12 September on the *Aliseo* at the head of a group of 32 ships consisting of: 10 torpedo boats, 8 corvette, 2 submarines, 1 MTB, 9 VAS [also a type of MTB] and 2 sub hunters.

The stop in Palermo was a week, during which arrived other light ships, all of which passed to the command of Adm. Nomis. Among these were 8 motosiluranti [MTB] at the command of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Paolo Emilio Pollina, who - left Capri at 06:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup> - had arrived in Palermo the afternoon of the same day.

At Palermo Adm. Nomis had continuous contacts with Captain Doughty of the American Navy, who was the head of the allied operational base in Palermo.

During that week the concern of the Adm. Nomis was to combine ships of so many different by type and place of origin, and to uphold the moral and dignified attitude of the staff, which acted in such a way as to arouse the admiration of the American authorities, explicitly expressed by Commander Doughty to Adm. Nomis in his visit when he was on his way to Malta.

The departure for Malta took place on 19 September with 39 ships, which Adm. Nomis divided into three homogeneous groups from the point of view of sustainable speed:

- 1<sup>st</sup> group (Speed = 17 kts): 8 torpedo boats (including the *Aliseo*) and a corvette;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> group (Speed = 9 kts): 1 torpedo boat - 5 corvette - 4 submarines - 3 motosiluranti [MTB] - 9 VAS [MTB] - 2 submarine hunters - 1 Motorboat - 1 speedboat;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> group (Speed = 6.5 kts): 2 torpedo boats - 2 submarines - 1 Tugboat.

Finally, a fourth group of three departed for Augusta with Prince Aimone, who, following the agreement of the King between the Italian Government and the Allied Governments, did not have to go to Malta but stayed in Italy.

The stop at Augusta had the sole purpose of carrying out the formalization of having the approval for the continuation of the trip by the English Command to Sicily and its resident, while the American had already given him standing in Palermo. After 3 hours of arrival, the 4<sup>th</sup> group went on to Taranto where the prince landed.

The three ships were: the Csmg. Zagreb, on which the Prince was embarked, and the Cov. *Folaga* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Carlo Thorel) and *Gru* in escort service.

When the Prince landed at Taranto, the group went to Malta where it went to the dependence of the new Naval Supreme Command instituted on the *Duilio* (Da Zara).

About the attitude of American Authorities, Adm. Nomis expresses this in his report:

"The attitudes of the American authorities, at first correct but guarding, went hand in hand by reaching out and becoming cordial, so that the control personnel provided by the armistice clause were never sent on board any ship and were accepted and satisfied with understanding and solicitude every request for our necessities of the moment, such as water supplies, food, hospitalization, private correspondence, etc."

About the staff, it reads: "All the crews were always disciplined and dignified: there were a total of 10 cases of desertion, all of Sicilian personnel, out of a total of about 1300 men.

During the short half-day stay in Portoferraio, Adm. Nomis - in relation to the order of Supermarina to compete to prevent German landings in Elba - had been able to do what he exemplified:

"On the day of the 10<sup>th</sup> had three corvettes who exchanged some cannon fire with German landing craft in the Piombino Canal, inflicting damage to the opponent, and in the night on the 11<sup>th</sup>, I ordered the TB *Animoso* and a corvette to go before Piombino to compete an action against German torpedo boats (ex. French) who had attempted a landing in the area, and one of which, hit by the batteries, was in the waters of the canal moving slowly for probable defects while the other had been sunk in port.

"Further assistance for this purpose had been requested by the Commander of Piombino's Troops at 18:00; But, given the type of opposing ships, it would have been necessary to send better armed ships than the corvette, and their intervention for the need to get into motion could only take place at nighttime, that is when the shooting was difficult to locate the Port's moorings would have been ineffective and even detrimental to the locality and local facilities. As a result, I stated that the requested action was not feasible".

The action of the three corvette deserves a reminiscent nod. They were *Folaga* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Thorel, Squadron commander), *Ape* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Balbo di Vinadio) and *Cormorano* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Raiani).

Exit from Portoferraio at 13:20 of the 10<sup>th</sup>, sighting at 13:50 five motozattere [landing craft] in the Piombino Canal, heading towards the beach of Cavo on northeastern Elba. They immediately opened the fire, forcing the motozattere [landing craft] to reverse course. From the *Aliseo* (Adm. Nomis), immediately received a warning to keep in mind the possibility of facing Italian motozattere [landing craft] and not to shoot.

Twenty minutes later the three corvettes crossed a diesel boat from La Spezia, and they confirmed that the motozattere [landing craft] were undoubtedly German because they had machine-gunned it just before.

Again sighting the five motozattere [landing craft] at 14:27 with a route below Piombino's coast to Populonia, they reopened the fire at 14:31, concentrating on the three trailing ships. A minute later, a motozattere [landing craft] was sunk, and the other four lay on the beach at Populonia Beach, here they ran aground around 15:00.

## 11<sup>th</sup> VAS 234 AND 235. THE DEATH OF THE COMMODORE FEDERICO MARTINENGO.

### a) *Foreword.*

Contramm. [Commodore] Martinengo came to La Spezia from Rome by order of Adm. Somigli, like Adm. of the Div. Nomis, on the morning of September 9<sup>th</sup>. He was the Supreme Commander of Anti-submarine Forces.

On September 8, 1943, 51 VAS\* existed, of which 41 were in service and 10 were under construction.

Twenty seven VAS were in the Upper Tyrrhenian Sea. As we have seen, 9 departed for the south by attaching themselves to the torpedo forces of the Adm. Nomis; 3 were captured by the Germans together with 3 landing craft

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\* A VAS is a motor torpedo boat sized vessel fitted out for anti-submarine work. Besides the armament they are generally slower at about 20 knots.



in front of Livorno; 3, unable to go south from Portoferraio, fell into the hands of the Germans; 4, who were in Imperia, departed on 9 September to Portoferraio, but intercepted on the 10th to the north of Elba by German ships and were diverted to Piombino, where they sank for rounds received during a combat between German batteries and Italian ships: 6, unable to sail, were sabotaged by crews or scuttled.

*b) The Admiral's death.*

The last two, with which he could leave La Spezia, Adm. Martinengo embarking on the 234, they were just 234 and 235. He left with these two VASs at 10:15 on 9 September after worrying about starting all the other VASs to La Maddalena, according to the first order received.

At around 12:30, near the Gorgona, the two VASs glimpsed on the left of the bow in the mist, at a distance of 4 - 5 thousand meters, two ships, which then turned out to be German MTBs, followed by an unprecedented combat, given the remarkable inferiority of the VAS's warlike characteristics compared to Germanic MTB.

"The two ships seemingly stopped," wrote. cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Henke accompanying Adm. Martinengo - immediately launch with interception path with the VAS and the Section Head ship commences with the projector the transmission of the international signal K [which means stop ship]. Interpreted the signal, the Admiral orders to increase the speed ... At 12:50 the Section Head ship opens fire with bursts of machine gun, rather short 234 direct on 234. The VAS machine gun responds immediately but the admiral orders to suspend temporarily focus on not to waste, obviously, munitions – distance to long].

"It takes a few minutes, and the two motor torpedo boats simultaneously open the fire with cannon and machine guns against the two VASs that have assumed a line ahead. These respond to it without delay, framing the two Germanic ships from the first bursts. A distance of 1,500 meters, due to the speed of motor torpedo boats, many rounds strike the two VASs, in particular the 234's deck ... At 13:20, a short distance from the Gorgona, the admiral decides to move to the island roadstead, in order to exploit the intervention of local batteries...

"Meanwhile, the fire continues intense on both sides and other bursts hit the bridge, producing minor injuries to the undersigned and the helmsman. At this time the admiral assumes the direction of the ship personally at the helm. At 13:30, a new burst of fire into the bridge and a shot, presumably a cannon, strikes at the base of the skull the admiral who falls dead: the death was instantaneous.

"At the same time, a fierce fire develops in the premises underneath the bridge, a fire that can not be contained.

"The shoot continues intense on both sides. As the 234 machine gunman reports that he has exhausted ammunition, the two VASs reach the island and head to Cala Scirocco. At 13:45, the two ships run aground at the Cala rocks and give orders to the armed personnel with SMGs and rifles to land. The fire of the 234 is constantly increasing and it is not possible to carry the fallen Admiral ashore.

"The two MTB, keeping themselves off, open the fire again against the VAS and the staff. From the ground, they respond to the shooting and at this stage it is noticed that the two Germanic ships have aboard numerous deceased and injured personnel.

"A few moments after 234, on which the fire has reached gas tank, explodes and sank.

"The two slow-moving German MTB move north-east, presumably to Livorno, The body of the Adm. Martinengo was recovered on the 14<sup>th</sup> and was buried with military honors in the Gorgona cemetery. To his memory was given the gold medal for military service. He, refusing to stop, had consciously accepted the fight against the superior ships and, by giving example of decision and courage, had sacrificed his life.

The same afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> came to Gorgona from La Spezia the VAS 209 which, having the main engine in failure, could not have headed for Portoferraio; Along with it were two local use tugs and a minesweeper\* flotilla.

VAS 209 continued for Portoferraio on September 15 and then fell into German hands. The two tugs and the trawlers were brought to Capraia.

Finally, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, VAS 235, which had not suffered serious damage, left for Porto Torres, turning west of Corsica to avoid the waters of the Tuscan archipelago, guarded by German ships, as from news that in those days Commander Henke could

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\*Minesweepers were mostly converter fishing trawlers.

until she was able to communicate with Livorno and Portoferraio. She came to Porto Torres at 10:00 am on the 24<sup>th</sup>, having aboard the 234 survivors.

## 12<sup>th</sup> OTHER RELATED NAVAL EPISODES.

### *a) The affair of the Ardito and the Impavido.*

By dealing with the events of the Torpedo Division, it has been seen that Adm. Nomis had to leave the torpedoes *Ardito* and *Impavido* in Portoferraio. The first one came from Bastia at 09:45 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the second from La Spezia on the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>.

The *Ardito* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Silvio Cavo) had some damage caused by German cannon firing at Bastia, as will be seen by dealing with events in that base; of the *Impavido* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Carlo Didero) has already been told.

They left the two torpedo boats in Portoferraio and repaired the damages with the few means that the base offered, their commanders made plans to depart despite the order to stay in the defense of the island. The last project would have to be done by sinking in the *Impavido* and leaving Palermo with *Ardito* with the crew of both torpedoes on board: the departure would have to take place on the evening of September 15, but while *Ardito* was about to move, entered Portoferraio (in advance of what had been announced) an auxiliary cruiser, motor torpedo boats and German minesweeper. So the supposed *Ardito's* escape had to be abandoned.

The next day, September 16, Portoferraio was occupied by a paratroopers unit and the two torpedoes were captured and transferred to Livorno on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with the auxiliary cruiser *Filippo Grimani*, with Germanic ships. However, they had time to destroy the secret archives.

### *b) Naval Academy and the motorships Saturnia and Vulcania.*

The *Saturnia* and *Vulcania*, who arrived in Venice from Trieste shortly before midnight on September 9<sup>th</sup>, with the orders received (See paragraph 3) to go to Venice with the 635 students of normal courses and the 735 students of complementary Academic courses of Venice Naval, with all the teaching staff, instructor and service.

The *Saturnia*, having completed the embarkation, left Venice at 12.30 on September 10<sup>th</sup>: in navigation, he received the order to go to Brindisi or Taranto. Toward the 14:00 of the 11<sup>th</sup>, when he was about to enter Brindisi's port, he met the Polish submarine *Sokol* who advised against it, claiming that the previous evening Brindisi had suffered a long airstrike (1). The *Saturnia* then went on to Taranto; But shortly thereafter, as he followed zigzagging the coastal security routes, he ran aground 15 miles south-east of Brindisi. While with the help of tugboats began unloading operations, Naval Academy personnel landed with all luggage and food. On September 14, the Academy regularly resumed its activity at the Naval College of Brindisi. The *Saturnia* was freed, after laborious maneuvers, on September 19, and was able to enter Brindisi.

The *Vulcania*, left Venice at 2 of September 10 and arrived in Brioni a few hours later, embarked on complementary students on the same day of the 10<sup>th</sup>. But cap. vasc. [Captain] Enrico Simola, director of complementary courses, did not consider it prudent to face the risks of navigation, without being able to have ships for the anti-submarine and anti-aircraft escort, with a large ship with unarmed civilian crew, carrying young people just recruited and completely without maritime knowledge. Therefore, authorized by Naval Commander of Pola (Div. Adm. Gustavo Strazzeri), the 11<sup>th</sup> made the students disembark (who largely ended interned in Germany) and ran the ship aground, making arrangements to make it unusable.

On September 17, the ship was located by the Germans and, having not reported tearing the hull but only bending of the sheets or having undergone irreparable sabotage operations, could return to Venice under German escort by carrying a large number of soldiers in the Pola area. In Venice, however, it remained inoperative until the end of the war.

c) *The School ships.*

On September 8 the *Vespucci* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Sebastiano Morin), the *Colombo* (cap. freg. [Commander] Carlo Liannazza), the *Palinuro* (cap. freg. [Commander] Ugo Giudice) moved (see par. 3) from Trieste to Pola, escorted by two MAS, Arriving after 24:00.

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(1) This news was not accurate; Brindisi on 10 September 1943 had two alerts for German aircraft sightings at 13:38 and 18:06. But no bomb attacks followed.

At 11:00 on September 9<sup>th</sup> they went south to Supermarina's initial order to go to Cattaro.

In the evening, between 22:30 and 23:30, the *Vespucci* took under tow the *Palinuro*, whose engine had failed. At 12:30 of the 10<sup>th</sup>, repaired the damage, *Palinuro* lacking enough coal and water to continue was commanded by Commander Morin to head for Ortona for the purpose of refueling.

After leaving only, the other two school ships, having news - from an intercepted message of Supermarina - that Cattaro was no longer a safe harbor, reversed the route at 18:00 to go to Ancona or Venice. Along the way they met some ships that from the North heading south and from them they learned that the northern ports were threatened or already occupied by German troops. So on the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> they turned directing the route back to the south. Finally at 12:00 in the afternoon, they arrived at Brindisi, where they arrived without accidents at 21:30 on the 13<sup>th</sup>, escorted in the last stretch of sailing by the corvettes *Fenice* and *Baionetta* sent to them.

The *Palinuro*, who came to Ortona the same night of the 9<sup>th</sup>, found that the town was to be occupied by the Germans. Then the Commander Giudice, as soon as he entered the harbor, sabotaged the ship and left the crew free. He then managed to avoid capture and the officer in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 10 men, after several unsuccessful attempts, was fortunate enough to embark on a fishing boat and to appear in the south to the Authority set up to resume service in the ranks of the Navy. His ship was blown up by the Germans in the port of Ortona, after futile attempts to restore it to efficiency.

*d) The sinking of DD Sella and that of GB Aurora.*

A particularly important episode occurred in the Upper Adriatic, ending with the loss of DD Sella (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Corrado Cini).

This DD was in the arsenal of Venice undergoing long work, almost completed on 7 September, and had to start trial testing.

In the early hours of September 9 the *Sella* received the order to keep at the disposal of the Duke of Genoa, order withdrawn at midday.

Immediately afterwards, the tests of all repaired parts began; the tests lasted for two days with continuous accidents and necessities

of immediate repairs, which made suspect sabotage actions by the crew on board to prevent the DD to depart, which the same commander was reluctant to bring to the south believing that he had to hand it over to the winners.

Finally, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the *Sella* had a peremptory order to leave for Taranto, with the ability to stop in intermediate ports if his conditions had not allowed him to continue. Commander Cini pointed out that he did not think he could go beyond Ancona, because the tests could not be done exhaustively and the DD still had various deficiencies: Adm. Brenta authorized him to enter, if necessary, Ancona by sabotaging the ship.

At 15.30 the DD left the arsenal of Venice heading to sea, after embarking on the baggage of the Duke of Genoa, who had departed two hours earlier for Taranto with a Cant Z 506 seaplane. The DD had the order to reach some minesweepers, who had escaped the harbor, forced them to return and then to continue.

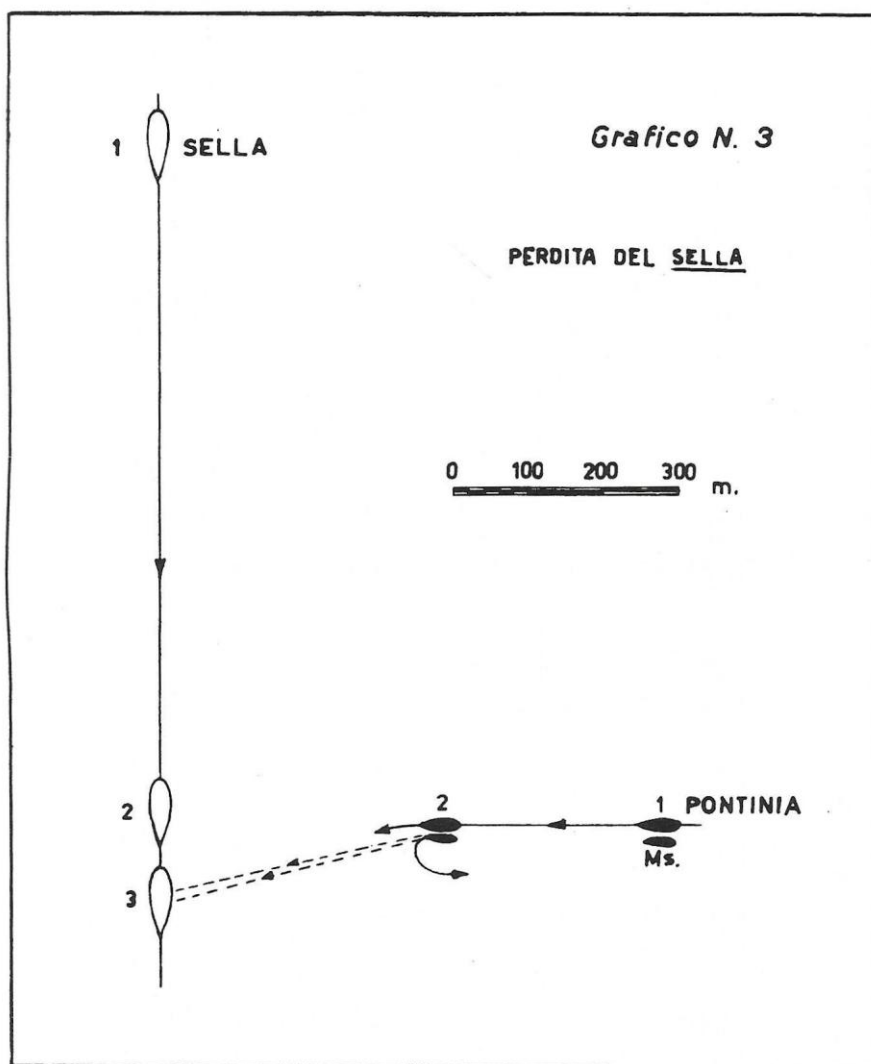
What happened shortly after this was reported by Commander Cini (Chart 3):

"At 16:00 I take the security route and increase speed. "At 16:30, damage to boiler no. 2. Which must be turn off reducing the speed to 14 knots. I proceed with a boiler waiting for the damage to be repaired.

"At 16:45 I crossed a motor ship loaded with passengers and soldiers [it was, as will be seen, MS *Leopardi*]. A port bow a small freighter leaving from Venice, being too swerve to the left [that is, offshore], is turned the 90° low speed to return to the safety course.

"At 17:00 I was about 20 miles from the mouth of the Lido Pass, on the safety route ... Continuing on my route I passed the bow to the steamer at a distance of about 400 meters. While I was heading down to this steamer, from a trawler side by side on the left side of the steamer, a motor torpedo boat which I could not see before, two torpedoes were launched.

"Immediately after the launch, I decided to open the fire against the attacking ship, which was instantly executed by all the left-handed machine guns. I immediately tried to maneuver to try to avoid torpedoes. But the failure in the boiler not yet repaired did not allow the engines to respond to the maneuver, the rudder stiffened and could not be turned. The two torpedoes reached the *Sella* at the height of the bridge and boiler n. 1 ... ", It was around 17:45.



The DD sank shortly after breaking into two and the commander with part of the survivors was recovered from the small merchantman (*Pontinia*) behind which the German MTB had concealed. He had a serious injury to the left leg, after which he was admitted to the hospital in Venice. On February 14, 1944, he was arrested by the German authorities while he was still in hospital, waiting to be shot for firing at a German ship. He was subsequently sent to Vittel's internment camp

(France) and from this to the prison of Moosburg (Bavaria). On 27 January 1945 he was able to obtain repatriation as an invalid, subject to the formality of an act of adhesion to the social republic.

Other survivors were recovered from other vessels; in total 27 people were lost, including 4 officers.

The episode of the *Sella* is related to that of MS *Leopardi*, which was the ship of passengers and military sighted by the DD and Cov. *Aurora*, sunk about 13:00 hours in front of the harbor of Ancona.

The *Aurora* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Attila Gamaleri) had left Pola at 17:00 of September 9<sup>th</sup>, following the BB *Cesare* for a while, with the order transmitted by the Commadore. Strazzeri Commander of the Pola Naval base to move at the highest speed to Šibenik, stopping at Zara for the night.

The *Aurora* came to Zara at about 01:00 on September 10, and announced that, as soon as supplies were forthcoming, he would continue at 08:30.

Ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Gamaleri, coming to the local Navy Command at 08:00, learned from a Mas just arrived from Šibenik that the situation there was very confused with firing and clashes between Italians, Germans and Yugoslav partisans.

It was ordered by the Commander of the Armed Forces of Dalmatia (Gen. Spigo), resident in Zara, to stay in the harbor while waiting for orders, but the Navy Command continued to supply it so that it could leave as soon as possible.

At 16:30 on the 10<sup>th</sup>. ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Gamaleri came ashore to inquire about the situation and learned from the base commander (cap. freg. [Commander] Giuseppe *Ferruccio* Rossi) that Gen. Spigo had signed the surrender of Zara's garrison, but confirmed to the *Aurora* the precise and peremptory "order of not moving."

But he, with the approval of Commander Rossi, decided to leave with the favor of the night in obedience to orders from Supermarina, heading to Ancona.

Gathered the crew, commenting on the situation and communicating his decisions, sailed slowly to avoid drawing the attention of some machine guns and 4 German heavy tanks, located on the quay with the, with the cannons facing the *Aurora*.

As soon as the ship started the propellers, a great fire was opened against it from a distance of about 700 meters. It was hit by a few machine gun rounds, but no shot of the tanks fortunately fell on board.



At 04:00 in the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, sighted two German MTBs the stop: the *Aurora* responded as quickly as possible, but shortly thereafter, two torpedoes were launched by one of the two MTB despite the ready maneuver to avoid them. In two minutes the ship disappeared due to the explosion of boilers. The MTB recovered 62 shipwrecks of the 88 people on the ship: among the shipwrecked was the commander, rescued by the same MTB who had fired the torpedoes.

At 06:00 this MTB, who had taken a course northward separating from the other, met the MS *Leopardi* from Rijeka with officers, soldiers, sailors and civilians with women and children of their families: a total of about 1,500 people. The *Aurora* shipwrecked were transshipped to the *Leopardi*, along with an armed escort of Germans. On the MTB the commander Gamaleri and his officer in 2<sup>nd</sup> remained as hostages, and on the MTB. was also found the cap. cov. [Lt. Commander] Barich the ship's commander of the motorship.

Commander Gamaleri saw the torpedoing of the *Sella*, carried out by the MTB who had already sunk his ship and was hostage. We excluded from his report some significant parts:

"At about 16:00 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the German MTB. spotted the *Leopardi* facing the coast near Venice, and shortly after it was accompanying the silhouette of a warship.. The MTB diverted the *Leopardi* to the east and maneuvered to keep it concealed from the aforementioned motorship with respect to the sighted warship.

"By 17:00 a small national trawler [*Pontinia*] was reached, which, at the intimation, stopped the engines. The MTB flanked her to the left, westward.

"The Lieutenant commanding the MTB, accompanied by three armed men, stepped onto the steamer and took hold on the left wing of the bridge ...

"After about 15 minutes the German ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] gave the attention signal "to the launch tubes of the MTB, followed shortly by "out".

"I look in the direction of launch and soon after I see the bow of a warship, with a route roughly normal to ours and at a distance of 3 - 400 meters. The DD, as soon as she finds the MTB, opens fire against us with the machine guns ...

"The MTB commander leaves on the steamer two armed men is back on board ... Orders the casting off and returns to

the MS *Leopardi*. As we sail away we see the steamer, who has served as an "owl", approaching the sinking point for the recovery of the shipwreck."

According to the officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the *Aurora* (sten. vasc. [Ensign] Papazian), the German MTB Commander told Captain Barich, just before getting on the *Pontinia*: "If the destroyer does not fall into the ambush, he will say that MTB was at his command, on pain of death".

e) *The end of torpedo boat T. 8.*

The torpedo boat *T. 8* (ten. Vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Marcello Bosio) was located in Ragusa, its normal operational base for convoy escort along the Dalmatian coast. Former Yugoslavia captured, displacement of about 250 tons and had some sixty crewmen.

The *T. 8* had come back to Ragusa at 17:30 on September 8 after escorting a convoy of tankers and steamships to Durazzo.

Having learned of the proclamation of armistice, the commander decided to follow - if necessary - to directive to sink the torpedo boat rather than deliver it to anyone.

On the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup>, the *T. 8* was ready to move to cooperate with the ground forces in order to prevent the Germans from occupying coastal locations and to convey all the boats that could be used for the exodus of troops, which were forced to depart to southern Italian ports.

At 22:00, he embarked on the cap. vasc. [Captain] Alfredo Berardinelli, commander of the Navy in Ragusa, to take the direction of the operations to be carried out. Immediately after the *T. 8* sailed.

After four hours, the *T. 8* landed in Curzola (02:00 on September 10), where he found hundreds of tearful and hungry soldiers waiting for help. He embarked as many as possible on the conveyed means that he had brought from Ragusa; Then went to Ploce (near Split), where he arrived at 06:00, presiding over the destruction of any existing military work and embarking his staff on other conveyed vehicles collected in Curzola and Gravosa, departing at 13:45 for Curzola in order to resupply with fuel and water. This destruction was made by Commander Berardinelli on *T. 8* in obedience to an order of the Command of the Army Corps of Dalmatia, transmitted from Maridzia.

Then, always in the execution of the directives received, he was able to save the staff of the semaphore station of Meleda under the torpedo boat's protective gunfire.

Lastly, he decided to go ahead with the *T. 8* an expedition to create the bridgehead of Malfi to counter the German advance to Ragusa, but as he headed for the convoy carrying the expedition he left his life on the *T. 8* sunk by German Stukas at approximately 16:10 of the same day of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

He wanted to return to Ragusa, to resume his post at the Navy Command alongside his employees when at 15:30 the port of Orlandini who had managed to reach him on the *T. 8* with a motorboat escaping capture, told him that Ragusa had fallen into the hands of the Germans.

While the *T. 8*, renouncing to continue for Ragusa, she had taken the safety routes near the island of Olipa with the intention of going to Curzola and then to Lagosta (to get water, which he had extreme need) and then proceed for Italy, suddenly 9 Stukas appeared from behind the hills of the island, starting the dropping bombs and strafing the torpedo boat.

A first bomb exploded near the stern producing minor damage; a second fell in the area of one of the two engines; a third hit the aft boiler; while the areas affected were filling with water, a fourth bomb hit the stern causing the explosion of two torpedoes and the ammunition depot. The *T. 8* disappeared in a few seconds: during the rapid action ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Bosio had maneuvered unperturbed in order to make it harder for the strikers to attack, and the crew had reacted to his order with the few weapons that the little torpedo boat had.

Half of the crew present on the ship disappeared with it, including Commander Bosio; many were injured. Among the dead was also Commander Berardinelli, who - as witness of the survivors - he gave to the last an example of cold blood and carelessly of the danger.

The survivors were collected, treated and looked after with care and courtesy by the Yugoslav partisans: those who, for subsequent events, managed not to fall into German hands were repatriated by the partisans who took them to Lagosta, where on 23 September the auxiliary cruiser *Lubiana*, sent by the Naval Command of Bari, who

embarked them on a transport to Bari on the 24th, along with many other servicemen escaping capture.

F) *Sinking of the Ammunition transport Buffoluto and Aux. Cr. Pietro Foscari.*

The *Buffoluto* (ten. Vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Matteo Mori) was on September 8 in La Spezia for repairs to boiler furnaces. He had no ammunition on board, except for the weapons on board.

At 08:00 on September 9, the commander in 2<sup>nd</sup> of the arsenal ordered the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] that He had to leave or to sink the ship. Since the latter had erected from the evening before the boilers were switched on, the ship could be quickly set up and started shortly after: at 09:40 it was already out of the La Spezia's harbor.

Not having been able to supply, he had little coal and little water on board, so he headed for Portoferraio (where the commander calculated that he could refuel and then go south) along coastal routes, in order to be able to anchor at any time if - given the bad state of the ovens - he had to stop the navigation.

Around 15.00, while the ship was heading to pass between the shallows of Meloria and the coast, he saw two ships traveling south with opposite course. At 15.30, when the ship was between the Meloria and the piers of the Livorno harbor, the two ships called with the projector and the *Buffoluto* replied by raising his name by flags.

Shortly after they opened the fire before Commander Mori could have distinguished the flag that was masked by their funnel smoke: they were the two large German minelayers *Pommern* and *Brandenburg*, who left Livorno a few hours before.

*Buffoluto* accepted the unprecedented combat, answering immediately with his two 100 pieces and with the machine gun.

In short it was riddled with shells, but fired as long as he could; a first projectile put the bow crewmen out of action; other projectiles devastated the bow structures; a projectile exploded on the control bridge, injuring the commander in one leg and the helmsman, and truncating the transmission of the rudder. While trying to operate the makeshift government station, the ship - left with the steering wheel all the way to the left - tried to get to run aground with the engines. But from the German ships, now reached a very short distance, a shower of projectiles continued

which increased the devastation of the *Buffoluto*, now unable to react, now unable to react, for putting out action of the stern gun and the machine guns: a shell had explode near him, throwing into the sea the officer in 2<sup>nd</sup> sten. vasc. [Ensign] Benvenuti. Also machine guns placed on the moles began to fire on the Italian ship.

A motorboat, with many German soldiers aboard, left the port, docked to the *Buffoluto* and a German officer asked if they had injured to land.

"Considering the position I'm in," wrote. ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Mori in his report - in the impossibility of dealing with other combat, with serious injuries on board and myself suffering from a lacerated wound - bruised on his right knee, the ship now made unusable by fires and with all superstructures and the hull completely riddled, I consider useless other resistance; then the motorboat approaches and embarks the wounded.

"At the same time, the German officer boarded with the armed personnel and placed two soldiers armed with a machine gun in front of me, calling two trawlers on the outer roadstead and orders them to tow me to the last section of a reclamation channel where I dock next to the root of the pier ".

The *Buffoluto*, towed into the harbor, was not put into efficiency by the Germans and at the end of the war was found sunken in La Spezia.

The commander, destroyed the secret documents and distributed the cash on board to the crew, managed to escape by evading the watch of the German sentries and to go to the hospital in Livorno to be cured.

Some sailors, who together with the 2nd officer were in the sea, were recovered by two rowing launches sent by the Naval Academy.

The two ships, with whom the *Buffoluto* had fought valiantly, had been operating in front of the coast between Antignano and Castiglioncello (just south of Livorno) against the Aux. Cr. MS *Pietro Foscari* and SS *Valverde* loaded with coal, escorted by him.

The two ships had left Genoa shortly after midnight on September 8<sup>th</sup>, and also headed to Portoferraio. Arrived in the coastal waters of the southern part of the maritime sector of Livorno, they had a story very similar to *Buffoluto's*.

The *Foscari* replied with his two 120 mm on the fire started by the enemy ships, imitated by batteries placed on the coast, but his reaction

was not so lively and so protracted to the extreme possibilities, like that of *Buffoluto*.

At about 15:00, the *Valverde*, hit in the stern, ran aground north of the Point of Castiglioncello.

*Foscari*, hit by one of the attacking ships heading north, went to the bottom in Castiglioncello Creek at about 15:30, also because one of the two engines had failed. The commander (cap. corv. c. [Captain] Leonarduzzi) sent an officer to Leghorn on the 10<sup>th</sup> asking for orders: Adm. Romolo Polacchini, commander of Navy Livorno, ordered him to depart without any conditions at least reaching Portoferraio, about thirty miles from Castiglioncello.

The officer, returning to Castiglioncello at around 19:00, found that *Foscari* had sunk. In fact, at 17:30 the German ships returned, accompanied by two MTBs, that with some well-aimed shots to the waterline had sunk him.

The commander, with a few people left aboard with him after nearly all the crew had already left the ship, saved himself so as not to fall prisoner.

The *Valverde* was soon destroyed by the MTBs.

g) *The fate of other ships.*

All the ships that were able to reach the southern ports did it: some went fearlessly to the bottom, but without episodic events that should be remembered. The only ones we think of mentioning are the Cov. *Gabbiano*, *Pellicano*, *Berenice* and Sub *Topazio*.

The Cv *Gabbiano* (ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Nilo Foresi) was at Gaeta's quay along with Cov *Pellicano* (ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Amleto Ferraù). At 02:15 of the 9<sup>th</sup>, some armed German soldiers aboard the *Gabbiano*, asking politely to speak with the commander.

Because many other German soldiers crowded on the catwalk, the guard staff tried to stop them but was overwhelmed and disarmed.

An officer appeared to the commander, inviting him to stand alongside Germany; He replied that he could not join without precise orders from his superiors and he proposed to go to the *Pellicano*, whose commander was senior than him. Accompanied by three Germans, ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Foresi moved to the *Pellicano*, but he was about to leave the port at the same time as

Sub *Axum* moored nearby. Even the Cov *Gru*, which was moored in an area where no Germans appeared, was a few minutes before the departure, moving to Ponza (from the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> to Palermo).

The officer in 2<sup>nd</sup> sten. vasc. c. [Ensign (res)] Osvaldo Perucca, with great readiness of mind and decision, managed to escape the oversight of the many Germans on board and suddenly, putting the engines at full strength without casting off the Moorings that broke.

"The gangway loaded with Germans, including the action, trying to make the land,," wrote the good sten. vasc. [Ensign] Perucca - detaches from the aboard making them fall into the sea, others throwing or being thrown directly from on aboard, two of which in the center of the ship they had already reached to capture it, the officer in 2<sup>nd</sup>. A furiously long-lasting surge of machine-gun shots from the ground ... there is only slight damage and three just light injuries on board We do not react to avoid hitting our own remaining in the hands of the Germans".

On the quay there were, in fact, prisoners of the Germans: the commander, with the engineer sten. d.m. c. [Ensign (res)] Giulio Lotti and the director of the shooting g.m. c. [Midshipman (res)] Giorgio Corti, and 24 men including 3 non-commissioned officers. Everyone caught and dragged ashore before the corvette could tear the moorings and leave. Five men managed to escape on the Cov. *Gru*, moored outside the inner harbor and managed to leave, then going to Palermo as mentioned.

The *Gabbiano* just on the go, was attacked by well-centered bombers, but did not hit it. He traveled to Portoferraio, but at about 09:00 on September 9 he received the order to go to La Maddalena, but - he was informed of the fall of this base - he was on the way to Portoferraio. Sten. Vasc, [Ensign] Perucca had in the meantime informed Supermarina of the adventurous departure, and in the telegram that ordered him to go to La Maddalena, this concluding sentence was included: "We express our satisfaction for your determined action."

At 17:50 pm the corvette saw the *Pellicano* at the island of Monte Cristo, joined it and both entered the port of the island.

Here they received orders to move to Bastia. Departing from Monte Cristo at 09:00 in the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, they arrived in sight of Bastia at about 16:00.

They saw two merchant ships and, as they headed to enter the harbor, noticed an explosion under the stern of the

leader: it was the motorship *Humanitas* (the other was the SS *Sassari*). They immediately headed for the *Humanitas* at maximum speed, noting that, even with the stern broken down - the ship was well maintained afloat. Lowering a boat of the *Gabbiano*, Some of the men were severely wounded men were recovered, while the commander of *Humanitas*, who also had a load of 1600 tons of ammunition, fearing an explosion, was abandoning it with the available crew, while *Sassari* could reach Portoferraio, escorted by the MAS 543. All the shipwrecks were assembled on two fishing trawlers out of Bastia.

The ship had been torpedoed by the Dutch submersible *Dolfijn* (apparently unaware of the armistice) that the two corvettes hunted without a positive result (without knowing it was an allied submarine).

At 19:20 the two corvettes opened fire against German aircraft, attacking the missed motorship, and they seemed to have hit one. Then they resumed the search for the submarine without tracing it.

The inappropriateness of towing *Humanitas* had to be recognized out of the question by the commanders of the two corvettes because they decided to sink the wreck of the ship by cannonade. Having accomplished this unfortunate operation between 23:00 and 23:30, the two corvettes entered Bastia at 01:00 of the 12<sup>th</sup>. They left Bastia around noon on the same day, heading for Monte Cristo by order of Naval Commander of Corsica residing in Bastia (Div. Adm. Catalan Gonzaga di Cirella): he had arranged for the two corvettes to be at Monte Cristo at his disposal, unless sudden complications did not advise the two corvettes to leave for southern ports controlled by the Allies.

They reached Monte Cristo shortly after 15:00 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and came out at 12:25 of the 13<sup>th</sup> to recognize a few motozattere [landing craft] with whom they exchanged a series of salvos, without any consequences, for a few minutes, after finding that the barges had a German flag.

Returning to the harbor at 13:15, they received an order from Maricorsica [Navy Command of Corsica] to go to Portoferraio, immediately canceled.

Immediately after the two commanders discussed what to do: the tenente di vascello [Lieutenant] Ferraù expressed the expectation of waiting for further orders or, at least, reliable indications on the evolution of the situation; sten. Vasc. [Ensign] Perucca insisted on leaving for the south. Ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Ferraù authorized him to do so and, given the *Gabbiano*, between the



licensed personnel\* and the ones captured by the Germans when departing from Gaeta, almost one third of the crew was missing, transshipped 23 men, all Sicilians.

So the *Gabbiano* left Monte Cristo at 16:00 on the 13<sup>th</sup>, setting off for the Lipari Islands. At 8:00 in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> he met two British MTB, he recognized himself with the signs set up by the armistice conventions and with them he came to Palermo at 15:45.

The *Pellicano*, left at Monte Cristo at 17:00 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, reached Palermo at 12:30 on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

From Palermo, the two Corvettes went on to Malta with the Torpedo Division on 19 September.

Much of narrative was taken from the mission report compiled by sten. vasc. [Ensign] Perucca, Temporary Commander of *Gabbiano* because the report of the *Pellicano* Commander was not found,

Instead, according to the report of Adm. Catalano about the events of Bastia, for which the two corvettes for some hours attempted assistance, some details are quite different.

Let's say what the Adm. Catalano wrote, and then take some thought into the reliability of the two versions.

"Day 11 September.

- Omission-

"To the Cov. *Pellicano* and *Gabbiano* who were heading to Bastia I gave the following orders:

- To the *Pellicano*: Move to the area from Point Chiappa to Cape Sagro capturing all the German means you encounter stop just as soon as possible, As soon as possible give news stop 113011.

- To the *Gabbiano*: In collaboration with *Pellicano* cruise from Point Chiappa to Cape Sagro capturing all the German means you will meet stop Give me your position stop 113011.

"In reply I received the following telegram: Maricorsica by ship *Pellicano* stop My position is miles 13 for 267° from Point Libeccio Pianosa stop From point C I will follow the coastal route to perform ordered exploration stop Ship *Gabbiano* with me stop Please communicate now return stop 134011 .

"I would communicate to the *Pellicano*: You will return to Bastia at 08:00 of the 12<sup>th</sup> stop Is all the coast frees of any barrier stop Aircraft landing Bastia is liberated stop 140411.

---

\*licensed meaning on leave.

"Having had at 09:00 the insurance that the *Humanitas* was still floating [it had suffered serious damage from a prodigious German fire of the day of the 9<sup>th</sup>], gave order for departure to Portoferraio, *Humanitas* and *Sassari* for 16:00 ...

"I also give order to the Corvettes *Gabbiano* and *Pellicano* to be at 16:00 outside the port of Bastia to escort together with M.A.S. 543 the aforementioned ships to Portoferraio ...

"At 16.00 *Humanitas* first leaves the port, followed a half an hour later by the *Sassari* ... M.A.S. 543 left after the *Sassari*. "About six miles from the harbor the *Humanitas* was immobilized by a torpedo, which struck the aft part.

"The Corvette *Pellicano* and the M.A.S. 543 had orders to hunt the submarine and the *Gabbiano* to escort the *Sassari*, who continued the route to Portoferraio.

"At the same time, our tugboat *Turbine* was ordered to leave the port and to take the *Humanitas* in tow to take him to Portoferraio.

"As the towing operations began, a formation of six German fighters attacked and bombarded the unmanned ship without apparent positive results as they strafed the *Turbine*, where the *Humanitas*' crew had been transhipped. The tugboat then, abandoning the initial towing operation, returned to Bastia. As soon as he arrived, he was ordered to return and retry the towing work, but in the meantime the floating condition of the ship was compromised, perhaps due to the bombs that had exploded near. The *Turbine* had to give up after the long and hard attempts to pick up and start the tow of the *Humanitas*.

"Not even the Cov. *Pellicano* was able to tow the ship, which sank slowly by the stern.

"So I decided to sink, giving the job to the Cov. *Pellicano*, and also considering that the wreck with the presence on the 1600 tons of explosive would be a danger to navigation.

"I ordered M.A.S. 543 to reach *Sassari* and escort the *Gabbiano* until Portoferraio, returning to Bastia by 08:00 on September 12th ...

"At about 23:50, the *Humanitas*, struck by the *Pellicano*'s projectiles, ... sank going down by the stern.

"The *Humanitas* sunk, the *Pellicano* returned to Bastia's harbor ...

“The SS. *Sassari* with the *Gabbiano* and the M.A.S. 543 arrived regularly at Portoferraio at 21:40 [on the 11<sup>th</sup>].”

It is noted that there is considerable disparity between the report of *Gabbiano* and Maricorsica's report.

Some of these, for the time range up to the sinking of the *Humanitas*, may be justified, bearing in mind that the *Gabbiano*'s Commander for failures to the r.t. apparatus's ultracore waves (used for short distance communications) could not communicate with either Maricorsica or the *Pellicano*, so it may have been that some decisions taken were the consequence of Maricorsica's orders instead of the initiative of the two Corvette commands.

But *Gabbiano* certainly did not escort the *Humanitas* to Portoferraio because sten. vasc. [Ensign] Perucca would not have missed such an important circumstance: he instead participated in the sinking of the *Humanitas*. There can be no other explanation than that derived from the consideration that the report of the Adm. Catalan refers to the events of those days throughout Corsica and that, therefore, some details may have escaped, or have been reported with little adherence to reality.

As for the SS. *Sassari* arrived in Portoferraio with M.A.S. 543 and then was captured by the Germans at the fall of Portoferraio. The M.A.S. returned immediately to Bastia.

Cov. *Berenice* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Antonio Bonelli) was in Trieste at the end of the preparations, with the crew complete.

Announced the armistice, the commander was kept ready on the morning of 9 September, as it was evident that the Germans were about to occupy the city.

At 07:30 he dashed to leave the harbor, expecting the order of departure of the Navy Command.

As soon as he was in motion, the corvette was invested by the cross fire of Germanic batteries, to which he bravely replied. But, severely damaged, he was immobilized and sank at 09:00.

The Sub *Topazio* (ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Pier Vittorio Casarini) left La Maddalena at 10:12 on September 7<sup>th</sup> to reach the area of ambush assigned to him in the Tyrrhenian Basin, followed four hours later by Sub *Platino* and *Turchese*.

On the evening of September 8<sup>th</sup> and on the day of the 9<sup>th</sup> he received the orders given by Maricosom as a result of the armistice, the last of which

(As with other submarines who were in the west coast of Italy) to go to Bona, while the submarines at sea in the east of Italy were ordered to meet in Augusta or Brindisi.

On the 9th and 10th days he remained together or in sight of the three Subs *Diaspro*, *Turchese* and *Marea* - they also headed to Bona - but the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> lost contact with them. From that moment on she did not tell broadcast any more news of herself.

Subsequently, official news from the British Navy revealed that on 12 September a plane had seen a submarine on the surface about 30 miles southwest of Cape Carbonara (Sardinia). It did not have the recognition marks prescribed by the armistice convention and therefore the aircraft attacked it, unfortunately, sinking it. Surely this submarine was the *Topazio*.

Other submarines, including *Platino*, reached Bona without accidents, except for the *Turchese* who at about 21:30 on the 11<sup>th</sup> - while on the way to Bona - reported considerable damage following the attack of a German aircraft.

h) *Incomplete or immobile ships.*

Ships who could not take the sea because in long-term repair work or because they were still under construction without enough staff or under construction were, depending on contingencies, either scuttled or sabotaged or abandoned (only those still in construction).

The ships that suffered this fate were 574, so spread:

66 scuttled;

303 sabotaged;

205 abandoned under construction.

Very few were military ships on which the Germans managed to put to their own hands on: and all of a small displacement or limited war power,

Of all the ships dropped in the hands of the Germans, either immediately or because they were sabotaged or abandoned, only 49 could be recovered by them efficiently and used for longer or shorter periods of time. Some were lost, under German flag, for war events during the struggle for liberation.

## CHAPTER III

### THE OBLIGATION OF SHIPS IN THE OCEANS

#### 13<sup>th</sup> THE VESSELS OUTSIDE THE MEDITERRANEAN.

The ships, which were on the armistice date outside the Mediterranean, were in part in the Far East, in part in Bordeaux at the base of Betasom (Submarine Command Operated in the Oceans) and in part at Gdansk (Submarine Training Center).

They were in the Far East: the colonial ship *Eritrea*;  
The Aux. Cr. *Calitea* 2<sup>nd</sup> (ex RAMB 2<sup>nd</sup>); The GB *Lepanto* and *Carlotto*;  
The Subs *Cappellini*, *Giuliani*, *Torelli* and *Cagni* (the latter still in navigation, directed to the Far East).

They were at Bordeaux:

The Subs *Bagnolini* and *Finzi*.

They were in Gdansk:

the *S. 1*, *S. 2*, *S. 3*, *S. 4*, *S. 5*, *S. 6*, *S. 7*, *S. 8*, *S. 9*.

#### 14<sup>th</sup> SHIPS IN EXTREME ORIENT.

##### *a) Foreword.*

Before talking about their fate in the armistice, it is appropriate to say how each of these ships were at the armistice in those waters so far from the homeland.

The *Eritrea* (Captain Marino Iannucci), built for the tropical seas and endowed with enormous autonomy thanks to its endothermic [Diesel] engines, had departed on February 18, 1941, from Massawa, to avoid the scuttling or catching of the moon in the imminent fall of that base. He had an order to reach a port

of Japan, which was then still neutral but willingly disposed towards Germany and Italy, which was bound by the anticomintern pact. The nearly 10,000-mile crossing, completed in 32 days, was crowned in full success: at 09:20 on March 22, the ship had dropped anchor in the harbor at Kobe Harbor. Two days earlier there was *Ramb 2<sup>nd</sup>* (renamed *Calitea 2<sup>nd</sup>*), which left Massawa two days after the *Eritrea* had preceded it for its greater speed.

The GB *Lepanto* and *Carlotta* had been stationed in the Far East for a long time, with a regular base in Shanghai.

The Subs *Giuliani*, *Torelli*, *Cappellini* and *Cagni* were part of the group of seven submarines destined - with appropriate adaptations, such as the landing of torpedoes and the use of the launch tubes to increase cargo capacity for the transport of precious raw materials for war production, which Japan could supply to Germany and Italy (1). The first two were on September 8<sup>th</sup> in Singapore, one already loaded and ready to leave for Bordeaux and the other in refit work. The third was in Sabang (northwest of Sumatra) ready to go to Bordeaux with cargo on board. The *Cagni* was in the South West Indian Ocean, headed to Singapore.

They had left Bordeaux:

- *Cappellini* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Walter Auconi) on May 11, 1943, arriving in Singapore on July 14, after touching Sabang on July 9;
- *Giuliani* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Mario Tei) on May 23, 1943, arriving in Singapore on 1 August, after touching Sabang on July 28;
- *Torelli* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Enrico Gropallo) on June 14, 1943, arriving in Singapore on August 31, after touching Sabang on August 26;
- *Cagni* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Giuseppe Roselli Lorenzini) on June 29, 1943, with operational tasks up to the waters of the West Indian Ocean and with the order to reach Singapore to load the foreseen raw materials.

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(1) The other three submarines were: *Tazzoli*, *Barbarigo* and *Bagnolini*. The first two, departing from Bordeaux for the Far East respectively on May 16 and June 15, 1943, were lost during the crossing for causes that could not be ascertained with certainty. The last one was in work at Bordeaux, along with *Finzi*, and also it intended to enter the round of supply submarine.. Only the *Cagni* did not need special adaptations.

*b) The Situation of the ship on 8 September 1943.*

The *Eritrea*, even before Japan entered the war, had resumed its activity and moved to China. In June 1943, he left Shanghai for Singapore following orders from Supermarina, who had designated it as "a support ship and escorting Italian freighters who started traffic between Bordeaux and Singapore."

Arrived in Singapore on June 14, Commander Iannucci had been able to quickly arrange oil and fuel supplies, repairing a repair workshop, and arranging housing for submarine personnel, with overwhelming difficulties. On July 3, the *Eritrea* first went to Penang, a base of German submarines, and then to Sabang, the headquarters of the German Navy Command in the Far East, to make arrangements.

On July 8th - while *Eritrea* was still in Sabang – when the *Cappellini* arrived from Bordeaux, the first who in less than two months had managed to make a 13,000-mile crossing without ever refueling, overcoming the enemy's hunt especially intense in the Gulf of Gascogne, the storms of Cape of Good Hope and the adverse sea in the Indian Ocean.

On 9 July, the *Cappellini* had resumed with the *Eritrea's* escorts and three days later was in Singapore, landing war material for Japan in exchange for rubber and tin for Germany.

The *Eritrea*, returned from Singapore on July 24 to meet at Sabang with the arrival of Sub *Giuliani*, who had sailed with the news of the Fall of Fascism, which had been welcomed on board with a sense of relief. The August 1<sup>st</sup> had returned to Singapore together with the *Giuliani*.

A third trip to Sabang had come to meet the *Torelli*; who returned to Singapore on August 31, scorning the *Torelli*. He had escorted until Sabang the *Cappellini*, who was ready to return to Europe.

Commander Iannucci, in his report on the events of that period, wrote that the fall of fascism and the advent of the Badoglio Government had caused a great deal of distrust towards us with the German and Japanese Authorities, which had started passive resistance and systematic obstructionism, aimed at preventing the departure of the submarines from Singapore, with the intent to capture them for Japan's benefit if we were detached from

the alliance. So *Torelli's* refit work and those of *Giuliani's* loading were slowed down right there.

Commander Iannucci, with unshakeable clarity of ideas, had deployed to the three submarines bombs for self-destruction to be carried out if the Japanese or the Germans had attempted by force to seize the submarines.

At the beginning of September he had to do with the local naval authorities and the central naval authorities of Tokyo through our naval attaché (amm. div. [Rear Adm.] Carlo Balsamo) to obtain the permission for the *Cappellini* and *Giuliani* to leave together on routes that did not cross Japanese zones of operation. It had been induced at this point by the fact that the local Japanese Command had invited him to return the *Cappellini* from Sabang to Singapore on the pretext that his presence in Sabang took up the berths of the Japanese ships that flowed there for the aforementioned operations.

The answer of Adm. Balsamo: "The Japanese Navy has confirmed that no Italian ship can leave Singapore. Therefore, make arrangements with Coast Guard Authorities to send a Japanese ship to Sabang to escort *Cappellini* to Singapore,

This telegram confirmed in the mind of Commander Iannucci his predictions on Japanese - Germans intentions. Very skillfully he got to take to the sea to travel to *Eritrea* (instead of a Japanese ship) in Sabang to find the *Cappellini* but could not obviously bring the *Giuliani* now ready.

Before leaving Singapore at midday on September 8th, he reminded the commanders of the two submarines to keep the bombs ready for self-destruction and the presumption of imminent serious incidents - he set the clock for radio appointments for any orders he could have given; He had made the same recommendations to the *Cappellini's* commander before leaving Sabang with the *Torelli* 10 days before.

Finally, in the night between September 8 and 9, the situation of the ships in question was as follows:

- The *Eritrea* navigating in the Straits of Malacca, headed to Sabang to join the *Cappellini*;
- *Cappellini* in Sabang, loaded and ready to return to Bordeaux;
- *Giuliani* in Singapore, also ready;



- *Torelli* in Singapore, coming in a few days, are under review and unable to make an immediate start.

It should be noted that on each of the last two submarines there was only one official and five men on board, three of whom were radio telegraphists for the listening shifts. All the rest of the crew stayed on the ground in order to rest, in buildings about 9 kilometers from the harbor.

The gunboat *Lepanto* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Morante) and *Carlotta* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] De Leonardis) were in Shanghai.

The Aux. Cr. *Calitea* 2<sup>nd</sup> (cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander (res.)] Mazzella's) was in Kobe in the yard, after carrying out missions in the Pacific under the Japanese Navy's orders, starting with the Japanese War Entry, for a total of 30,000 miles.

There were also numerous steamer in the Far East, including the Transatlantic [liner] *Conte Verde*, also in Shanghai.

*c) The fate of the Eritrea after 8 September.*

The *Eritrea* was in the southern part of the Strait of Malacca when, at 05:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> (22:00 on the 8<sup>th</sup> in Italy), he intercepted a telegram of Supermarina so conceived: "Supermarina to Naval Supreme Command E.O. [stop] Ships and submarines attempt to reach British neutral ports or scuttle [stop] 210408,

Commander Iannucci read the dispatch to the crew and stated that he was strictly to follow what had been ordered. Then he sent by r.t. [radio] aired several times with the special encryption for submarines - transport, but only the *Cappellini* intercepted the transmission.

He understood that the war against the Allies was over, he abandoned to go to Sabang, chose the routes on which he would be less likely to be discovered by Japanese reconnaissance, he was lucky not to be sighted, and the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> was in the Indian Ocean, After heading north to Sumatra.

It was understood that it would not have been possible for him to reach Italy, although the autonomy of the ship would allow him, and in obedience to the order of Supermarina - who in the telegram first mentioned an English port and gave an alternative neutral port - decided to run for Colombo.

At dawn on the 14<sup>th</sup>, he informed Colombo by radio that he would appear before the base at midday, and at the beginning of

the entrance security route found an English lookout waiting for him with a pilot.

He had in the meantime intercepted a statement by the Transocean Agency, who spread the clauses of the armistice.

In Colombo, the ship was welcomed as the commander wrote: "Two British officers, a pilot and an armed marine, to get entrance to the port.

"Communicate to the most senior, Lt. Commander Weck, who, according to the orders given by the Italian Navy, is asking to enter the port under the armistice rules agreed between the Allies and the Italian Government. Having been asked I give him my word of honor to execute the subsequent orders that will be given to me, without attempting to react or hurt the ship.

"British sentinels are placed at the access of ammunition depots, engines, boats, and radio stations. Disassembling the cannons and machineguns, handguns are delivered, including the officers' personal guns, and the keys of the safes; The radio transmitters are finally sealed ... I have a clunk on my throat; I have to make efforts to show me impassive; Everyone looks at me.

"But to this point nothing to complain about. Disarmament operations have not yet ended when Commander Weck's orders me to lower the flag ... I note that *Eritrea*, according to the armistice clause, must undergo disarmament, not the surrender. For a moment I whisper the idea of reacting at any cost, but my action would have no justification. On the other hand, I am sure it is a mistake: a serious mistake, which must be repaired by the one who has committed it."

The mistake was repaired on September 18th solemnly in the presence of the British Navy; The British sentries were simultaneously removed, and shortly the ship would get the cannon breaches and the portable weapons.

Finally on September 24, Somerville, commander of the Eastern Fleet and formally longtime commander of Force H in Gibraltar, wrote to Commander Iannucci the letter reproduced in the photograph, after having had a cordial interview with him on the Cr. *Kenya* his flagship arrived in Colombo on September 23.

Somerville's letter, translated into Italian, sounds like this:

"Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that the instructions concerning the flying of the national flag by the Italian ships entering

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.  
EASTERN FLEET.

24th September, 1943.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the instructions concerning the flying of the National Flag in Ships of the Italian Navy entering British ports had not been received prior to the arrival of His Italian Majesty's Ship ERITREA at the port of Colombo.

2. These instructions were received subsequently, and I therefore request that you should consider the order to haul down your flag as annulled and to regard this incident as not having taken place.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,



ADMIRAL,  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The Commending Officer,  
H.I.M.S. ERITREA

British ports had not been received before the arrival at Colombo of R. Ship *Eritrea*.

"These instructions have been received afterward and therefore I ask you to cancel the order to lower the flag and to consider the accident as it did not happen.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant

P. F. SOMERVILLE

Admiral

Commander in Chief“.

The *Eritrea* remained in the Indian Ocean based at Colombo until the end of the peace treaty, except for a period of about 6 months in Taranto for repair work during the autumn - winter 1944 – 45. From Columbus she carried out a large number of missions for escort and submarine search between Colombo and Trincomalee. Commander Iannucci left the ship on November 20, 1943, repatriating with British naval means and aircraft after almost three years from taking command.

*d) The fate of the three submarines in the Singapore area.*

The fate of the three submarines picked out for capture by the Japanese.

The *Cappellini* could not leave Sabang, as his commander had decided to do and how he tried in vain, to escape from the Japanese with the excuse to go out for exercises, because in front of the port exit immediately anchored two Japanese destroyers with firearms ready to fire against it; Nor could he scuttle because he had a few decimeters of water under the keel.

The officers' council, summoned and chaired by the commander on September 9 after the Japanese refusal to allow the submarine to depart for exercises, decided not to sabotage it by sending to the local Japanese Command the following statement signed by Commander Auconi:

"At this moment I come to the news that Italy was forced by the irresistible enemy pressure to abandon the struggle. I must now declare my non-belligerence to the allied nations [ie Germany and Japan] and ask for treatment similar to that made by the British to the

French ships at Alexandria, Egypt. I will step away from doing hostile acts against anyone and I will keep the cargo I have for the disposal of the legitimate owners: however any action by anyone who intends to take off my flag or take over the submarine under my command will find me and my crew deciding to the extreme consequences”.

The letter was personally handed to the Nippon Command from cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Rabajoli and the magg. g.n. [Major of Naval Engineers] Simeoni (submarine services). Adm. Hiroaka watched and summoned Commander Auconi immediately, urging him to land immediately with all the crew. He responded to this statement confirming his firm will to stay on board and to explode the submarine in case of aggravation of the situation. In the face of his attitude, the Japanese admiral committed to respecting the extraterritoriality of the submarine by temporarily granting treatment similar to that which the French ships had in Alexandria after the armistice of 1940.

Japanese sentinels were placed at the moorings and it was announced that any sabotage attempt would be repaid by shooting the entire crew, beginning with the commander.

According to international standards, the submarine landed almost all the oil and made the on-board radio unmanageable.

The commander, however, destroyed the secret archive and organized the defense against any assault, one of which had been attempted as he handed over the letter to Adm. Hiroaka and the latter stopped just in time.

On September 12, Cappellini received the order to move to Singapore, to land materials destined for Germany. The commander replied that he would not move without a written commitment that even in Singapore the non-belligerence and sovereignty of the submarine would be respected.

After long and tedious negotiations he succeeded in obtaining this signing of Adm. Hiroaka, in the form of *gentlemen's agreement* in 10 points.

On September 13, the submarine left Sabang for Singapore, with a Japanese destroyer escort on which was embarked cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Rabajoli and the Maj. Simeoni.

On the *Cappellini* a Japanese submarine officer with a personal alert signal was sent for the radio communications who always stood in the maneuvering chamber, after having flipped the rudder transmission dials to the horizontal limits to prevent

the boat escaping by diving. On the other hand, every attempt to escape would have been impossible because the submarine had enough oil on board to arrive in Singapore with a modest margin of safety.

The submarine arrived in Singapore on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Commander Auconi was immediately summoned by the Commander in Chief of the area, Admiral Enamoto, surrounded by numerous experts, who demanded the delivery of the submarine by saying - but lying - that the *Torelli* and *Giuliani* had done so.

After nine hours of discussion, Commander Auconi came to conclude an agreement so conceived:

"The Nippon Command, given the particular situation in which the Sub. *Cappellini* after the armistice between Italy and the United Nations, given the loyalty demonstrated by the commander of the submarine and his crew, as well as the still alive memory of their magnificent mission, agrees to accept the state of "non-belligerence" of the Boat and its crew by granting an internment regime for the duration of the conflict similar to that practiced in the port of Alexandria to the French ships by the British Government and specifically:

Point 1 – The sub. *Cappellini* will continue to fly the Italian national flag: it will keep its commander, general staff and complete crew.

Point 2 - The commander, the master and the crew will be accommodated in a special reserve near the mooring and will be daily allowed a team of 15 people to board on the necessary maintenances.

Point 3 - After sunset, only one guard officer and three armed sentries may remain on board, who will be able to carry out their service above deck but not on the dock.

Point 4 - No Japanese military or civilian can go aboard the submarine without a permit duly signed by the commander of the boat itself.

Point 5 - Italian military can only circulate aboard their submarine and within the allocation they are destined for. The transportation of personnel from and to the board will be done by bus provided by the Japanese Command.

Point 6 - Only Commander Auconi will be authorized to visit any time of day and night on board for inspection at his request.

Point 7 - The cargo of rubber and other materials in Sordo will be landed and returned to the Japanese Authority.

Point 8 - Any act of hostile or attempted sinking or damaging the boat by anyone and under any circumstances shall be punished by the immediate shooting of the commander, the chief of staff and all members of the crew without any form of process.

For the Japanese

Government,

Admiral  
ENAMOTO,

Back on board, the commander read this document to the crew. Things, however, took a turn and came to a quick conclusion far different from the agreed one.

He - who had carried the ship's combat flag with him - and the crew were brought to rickety barracks two hours by bus from the submarine berth and left for two days without food. On the third day, the officer and the three sentries were taken to the barracks, left aboard, with the news that the Nipponese had taken possession of the engine room of the submarine.

Commander Auconi sent the following day, September 20, a vibrant protest to the Adm. Enamot, *labeling it a lack of honesty*. In response, the barracks were invaded by a gang of armed men, *who searched everything, the original of the agreement signed by the admiral disappearing*.

It was however seen and read by all the crew members, and "their testimony," comments Commander Auconi, "is an inexplicable documentation of the betrayal of the Japanese tradition against military tradition *in order to snatch our submarine which we have tried to defend with every means.*"

The subs *Giuliani* and *Torelli*, moored - as mentioned - in Singapore, at the time of the armistice had on board the guard, while everything else was in the bays about 8 kilometers away.

Towards 04:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, appeared to Commander Tei (who was in bed with a strong fever attack), one of the guard men on the *Giuliani*, sent by the officer on board, informing him of the interception of a foreign radio,

announcing the unconditional surrender of Italy, and the Badoglio's message of 19:45. According to the Italian time of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The order of *Eritrea* was not intercepted, which repeated that of Supermarina of 21:04 of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Commander Tei, consulted with Commander Gropallo, on the basis of what he could only argue with two interceptions he knew, which did not contain precise provisions except that of Badoglio to "react to any attacks", sent on board two officers with the order to be ready for the possible sinking of the ship after their order or their initiative in the case of Japanese capture and examined with Gropallo the possible alternatives:

- start for a neutral port (inaccessible, without Japanese consent);
- sinking the ship (only executable for higher order or in case of aggression by either Japanese or German);
- be interned (considered the most appropriate, bearing in mind that this would not favor any of the belligerent parties and would preserve the ships).

During the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Commander Tei had two talks with Japanese Naval Authorities.

After the first, with the pretext of suspending the free exit of the staff to avoid interfering with the tactical ground exercises that took place in the surrounding area, their chambers were guarded by armed soldiers; with this measure the prison began.

In the second interview, Adm. Enamoto imposes more severe conditions than those committed to by Commander Auconi with the Sabang Authorities.

The situation was dragged until out September 23, when the Chief of Staff of Adm. Enamoto and gave half an hour to the two crews to prepare for the transfer to the internment where Cappellini's staff was already present.

In the 14 days between September 9 and 23, various facts had taken place, including:

- the Japanese capture of the few guardians aboard the submarines, followed by the easy takeover of the boats;
- the tentative, failed attempt to sink the boats on the 14<sup>th</sup> by some sailors under the command of an officer by order of Commander Tei;



- the communication made on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the two commanders from Adm. Enamoto of the constitution of the social republic, with an invitation to associate: the commanders had responded by confirming their loyalty to the King's Government and asking that the submarines be allowed to continue to preserve the flag; Adm. Enamoto had responded with a "yes" with tight teeth.

In those two weeks the disciplinary situation had some cracks, as while sailors continued to follow the officers, almost all non-commissioned officers wanted to adhere to the Japanese collaboration invitation, driven mainly by fear of an internment that - in Japanese hands - could have been hard.

On the complex vicissitudes, through which the three crews passed before returning home at the end of the war, we think we can fly over to tell of the fate that has touched the submarines.

They were all three captured by the Japanese in the circumstances we have exposed.

The *Giuliani* was given to the Germans who imposed on it the name of C.I.T.23. On February 14, 1944, in the Channel of Malacca, during a mission, was sunk by the British submarine *Tallyho*.

*Cappellini* and *Torelli* initially had the same fate: they ended up in the hands of the Germans, who called them U.I.T.24 and U.I.T.25. When the hostilities ceased in Europe, the Japanese Navy incorporated them, renaming J.505 and J.504. After Japan's collapsed, they were sunk, along with other submarines, by Americans off Kobe.

*e) The fate of sub. Cagni.*

The sub *Cagni* was the only one to have a satisfying fate.

He left Bordeaux at 04:00 on June 26, 1943 with the following instructions: "War against isolated traffic along the transfer routes to the Atlantic, in the eastern coasts of South Africa and Mozambique's Channel: Provision to South East Mauritius, by a German corsair, about 250 tons of naphtha, 20 tons of oil, water and food for the continuation of the mission; Expected to operate later in the seafront in front of the western coasts of India (Bombay-Colombo); To navigate, when at the limit of autonomy, to Singapore for work, embark rubber and tin, return with that cargo to Bordeaux.

Forecast for the first part of the mission months five. For the return from Singapore to Bordeaux about four months, the reduced speed for loading cargo in place of oil replacements,

Towards two o'clock in the morning of July 25, the submarine had struck with torpedoes a aircraft carrier escorted by 4 DDs, which did not go down but was put out of combat for the rest of the war. At the end of the conflict it turned out to be the escort carrier *Asturias*. The blast had been about 200 miles west of Freetown.

The next day, on the *Cagni*, the news of the fall of fascism given by EIAR (currently RAI) was "intercepted on board with a sense of general satisfaction".

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, while *Cagni* was at about halfway to the Sant'Elena island connected with Cape Town, he had received the order to stop operating activity and continue straight to Singapore at maximum speed allowed by the residual oil reserve.

On September 8, the submarine was about 720 miles southeast of the Mauritius islands and 1100 miles east-southeast from the far south of Madagascar.

During the night between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> the submarine received the news of the armistice transmitted from a British station.

"On September 9, 10 and 11," wrote the commander, "the news of the armistice is confirmed by all the Anglo-American, Germanic, and neutral radio transmissions that I can intercept: from Radio Rome intercepted in part the proclamation of H.R.H. the King of Italy, ordering Italian ships to travel to the nearest British port; The same German radio communicates news of German operations in Italy to overthrow the Italian army and civilian population ... I change the route by turning to the east.

"I receive, in the following days; the proclamations of Hitler that codify the form of brutal overwhelm Germanic reaction assumed by them in Italy. I have news of the sinking of the *Roma* following the attacks of Germanic airplanes, of the total faithful execution of the orders of the Government of H.R.H. by all the Italian war and mercantile ships; knowing that some of the ships in the Italian Navy have already entered into action against Germanic ships.

"I communicate to the crew all the news I receive through radio broadcasts.

"In the night from 11 to 12 I receive from the Bordeaux radio of Betasom

"The Atlantic submarines have unanimously demanded to continue the war alongside Germany. I'm sure *Cagni's* valiant crew with her heroic commander will follow their example for the honor of the flag and the memory of our fallen. Continue mission. Communicate scheduled arrival date. signed Grossi" ...

"Since I am aware that the German liaison officer at Betasom has always had the opportunity to use our ciphers, I believe that we can not rely on the origin of that telegram ...: I believe that there is no longer any possibility of Italian - German collaboration for the continuation of the war ... (1).

" ... From an objective point of view, I believe that there is no longer any interest in continuing the mission for Singapore ... The solution to head for Durban (in the UK Domain of South Africa) is therefore the most in line with our commitment of fidelity to H.R.H. the King, with the interest of our Italy, with the desire to continue to fight until Italy is free and to reconstruct, according to the righteous aspirations of the People, its well-being and its future ... ".

The commander then on the 12<sup>th</sup> put on course directly to Durban, far far from Mauritius, but where he could perform work to put the ship back in good efficiency. He then inquired each person to know whether, in complete conscience, he felt obedient to the legitimate government's orders, having agreed to allegations of loyalty.

So at 23:30 on the 19<sup>th</sup>, after preparing the ship for scuttling to get rid of surprises and destroy the secret documents, the Durban Command warned by radio that it would be in front of the port at 09:30. Piloted by the escorted ship *Jasmine* into the harbor, with the crew in perfect order on the submarine after 85 days of sailing, often stormy.

Relations with the British authorities, after the first inevitable events of mistrust, became very soon very cordial; all of them became comrades after October 13, the date of our declaration of war to Germany. Great credit goes to

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(1) The telegram was not apocryphal. In the report to Mussolini by Grossi (which, as we shall see, he has made full adherence to the government of Salò) reads: "The betrayal of the sub. *Cagni* induced the [German] allies to deprive me of Atlantic submarines".

Commander Roselli Lorenzini for his firm, dignified, loyal attitude since the start of the mission.

After a few days of arrival, the crew granted the free exit to the city and the submarine was well repaired.

On 8 November 1943, escorted from the sub hunter *Virginia*, the *Cagni* left Durban and arrived in Taranto on January 2, 1944 after touching Mombasa, Aden and Haifa.

It is of great interest to report some impressions collected by Commander Roselli during his stay in Durban and the subsequent British ports he touched.

"In the anglo - american military and civic environments I have attended, it is generally the impression that Italy has entered the war unprepared and without any reason sufficiently serious; That the Italian people are generally lovers of peace and unfit for war; Who is also an ally on whom no trust can be made. In the South African military environments, the series of land defeats suffered by Italy are attributed to a lack of military personnel with adequate quality to their task; Those who participated in operations in Ethiopia claim to be amazed at the enormous amounts of weapons and supplies generally (including petrol and gas) that they found locally; Supplies with which they would have carried out all the subsequent operations as they occupied the territories of I.E.A. (1).

"Regarding the judgment of the past fascist regime in Italy, it is a general opinion that his leader has done a great deal for the welfare of the country until 1937; And since a person of great value is generally judged, he has the impression that for having followed a wrong policy after that time, he also lacked the support of the People too fond of peace to follow him in an adventure of reach of the present war.

"In the British navy environment, such a severe judgment is tempered by the impression that the Italian Navy has fought well in the three years of the Mediterranean war, although it has in some cases demonstrated an indecision that has given the British the way to have unexpected successes, and an impropriety in the means that often rendered them inadequate to the purpose. In some cases - Malta's situation at the beginning of the war, a situation created following the advance on El Alamein,

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(1) This may have been true for the Army's petrol and gasoline, but certainly not true for Navy's lacks of fuel oil and for aviation gasoline.

the existence of British naval vessels in the eastern Mediterranean in that period [this is true, if we only refer to the absence of large ships], Malta's situation over the same period of time - state that they were very amazed at the lack of energetic action which would have been successful and would put badly their strategic situation (1).

"The armistice did not cause a favorable judgment for Italy; this also because Anglo-American propaganda seizes every opportunity to declare that the contribution of the Italians to the Allied War effort will never be remarkable. So the situation in Italy is judged as a wretched country that has thrown out of necessity in the midst of greater events than it could not withstand.

"This impression is confirmed by the attitude generally taken by Italians abroad (South Africa and Aden): nobody welcomed the armistice, which, if it brought them benefits in normal life, also caused a loss of prestige, so they are rather a criticism than an adherence to the policy of the Italian government.

"In civilian populations, according to their judgments above and to the impression that the Italians did not fight for hatred towards the Allies, it is not difficult to create currents of sympathy and restore normal relations.

*f) The fate of ships present in Chinese waters.*

The Navy Supreme Commander in the Far East cap. vasc. [Captain] Giuseppe Prelli, with his flag on the *Lepanto*, was in Tokyo on September 7 on a mission and had temporarily handed over the command to cap. vasc. [Captain] Giorgio Galletti, a naval officer based in Shanghai, China.

The latter, as soon as received from Supermarina, the order - already reported by the *Eritrea* - from 21:04 of September 8, convened the commanders of the *Lepanto* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Morante) and *Carlotta* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] De Leonardis), and gave them the provisions for the immediate sinking of the ships. He then ordered commander Morante to transmit the same order to the commander of the *Conte Verde*

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(1) From the end of 1941 onwards, the lack of oil handicapped the Navy's will to act.

(cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander (res.)] Chinca), which had been hired by the Japanese Navy on August 24, 1943, but had not yet been taken over.

At 07:30 on September 9, the three ships at a *Lepanto*'s signal scuttled simultaneously. Only the *Carlotta* remained partially out of water because it leaned on one side of the *Lepanto*, which it flanked during normal mooring.

The *Calitea 2<sup>nd</sup>* went to the bottom at Kobe about 11:00 of the same day of the 9<sup>th</sup> for the skill with which Commander Mazzella managed to carry out scuttling operations, despite the presence on the part of a hundred Japanese engineers and Japanese workers doing repair work. In leaving the ship in the process of overturning the commander was seriously injured.

All the crews were interned with a very rough treatment (which cost some life) and court marshaled: death was spared, because the Japanese defender could convince the court that the Italians had executed the order of their Government, aware of the severe reprisals to which they would meet.

The four units had the following final fate.

Given the shallow waters in which the four ships had to go to emergency scuttled, in order not to be captured, they could be recovered by Japanese and reused by the Japanese Navy.

*Lepanto* was renamed *Okitsu* and delivered as a Japanese ship to the Chinese government on August 15, 1945 in Chusan.

The *Carlotta*, named *Narumi*, was handed over as a Japanese ship to the Chinese government on August 15, 1945 in Shanghai.

*Calitea 2*, after recovering, remained in service under the name of *Irutagawa Maru*. It sank at Saigon on January 12, 1945 for an American air strike.

The *Conte Verde*, a year after scuttling and having suffered damage caused by air bombardments, was recovered, called *Kotobuki Maru* and towed to Japan. After the end of the war, it was found in Maizuru, which had not yet been put into effect.

## 15<sup>th</sup> THE SHIPS AT BORDEAUX AND DANZICA.

Of the eight submarines, dependent on Betasom on the date of the armistice and all destined for missions of freight from the Far East to Bordeaux, there were, as has been seen, only two,

both in work, but not for that impossible to take the sea. For all eight, it was planned to be sold to Germany, which provided 9 subs of 750 tons that were at Gdansk with Italian crews training.

The two submarines in Bordeaux were *Bagnolini* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Aldo Congedo) and *Finzi* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Nicola Dellino).

On the evening of 8 September, half of the crews of the two submarines was in a license [on leave] - resting at Arcachon: the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Congedo was amongst this crew.

The captain of Betasom was cap. vasc. [Captain] Enzo Grossi, who enjoyed great prestige to be considered the have sunk two US battleships (which was not confirmed by the rigorous records examination after the war).

At the first news of the armistice, those who were on leave were called back on board and made provisions to prevent any seizure. It was arranged the return of those who were in Arcachon.

At 22:30 on the 8<sup>th</sup> arrived at Betasom, the Chief of Staff of the Army Territory, whose Command resided in Bordeaux, officially confirming the armistice and asking for assurances that no act of war or sabotage of ships in the port, ground facilities and various Italian steamships would be made there.

The insurance was given, although the Commander Grossi received from Supermarina a telegram ordering him to destroy the Italian submarines, to return the German (Danzica) submarines to the German Navy and to request the free transit to return to Italy together with all its personnel.

The exact time this order was delivered to it was not possible to ascertain whether it was before or after 22:30. It carried the hourly protocol of 21:08 of September 8<sup>th</sup>. The fact is that Grossi did not mention to any of his employees of this order, if not a few days later, arguing with the argument that it was unmanageable, given the immediate vigilance of the Germans around the moorage site in their full occupied territory .

But, given Grossi's proven disposition to continue the war alongside those from whom the legitimate Government had detached with the conclusion of the armistice, it must be assumed that he had deliberately kept silent about having received the order of 21:08.

In the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>, he boarded the *Finzi*, in agreement with the German authorities, transferred the two submarines from the area of

the base reserved for our submarines into the German submarine bunkers. They stayed there under the guards of German staff, but with the Italian flag. This was adjourned on 14 October, following Italy's declaration of war on Germany.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Grossi made two speeches to the staff, insisting on continuing the fight with the Germans. However, he left each one to decide; the majority adhered, even in the face of Germanic reprisals which in fact struck dissidents.

Therefore, of all the ships of the Navy, the only ones that were delivered to the Germans without any attempt to sabotage and deliberately to disobey the orders of the Government were the two submarines present in Bordeaux and consequently - for instructions of Grossi - also the 9 submarines located in Gdansk.

For the *Bagnolini* the Germans named her U.I.T.22 and to the *Finzi* the name of U.I.T.21.

The first was sunk by British aircraft on 11 March 1944 in the waters of the Cape of Good Hope during the first voyage she was doing under the German flag to go to the Far East to load raw materials.

The second was not used because, after several trials, it was deemed unsuitable for long ocean missions and disarmament. During the evacuation of Bordeaux, after the Allies landed in Normandy, it was blown by the Germans.

## 16<sup>th</sup> CONSIDERATIONS.

It can be concluded that the proof of discipline given by the Navy sailing in the delicate phase of an armistice, immediately characterized by the complex affair that is called "reversal of alliances", was total. Nor is the exception of the submarines present in Bordeaux and Gdansk an appreciable crack, but on the other hand, it is not possible to observe, with a spirit sufficiently detached from those historical events, that the environment in which those men were able to decide in the wholly Germanic territory and the three-year-old habit of living and working with the Germans could not fail to determine a favorable orientation for them, especially when the example came from their superiors.

It can be concluded that Italian sailors have performed their duty as soldiers in the fateful days of September 1943, giving a spectacle of moral firmness and obedience



agreement, which marked Italy's first step towards a better destiny.

If the Navy did not obey, the Allies would have estimated that they were dealing with a people of poor spiritual balance, with a government without authority and with which they could not be confidently treated with a national body where nothing remained solid to reconstruct the future with renewed spirit.

From obedience, *which is a virtue of the strong*, on September 8 it immediately came to the sea cooperation between the Allies and the Italians, which brought in a short time the declaration of war to Germany, to active co-belligerence without any doubt to the Air Force and, after a more laborious period of preparation imposed by organic and technical necessities, to the Army (the Navy, resuming the tradition of the Isonzo and the Piave, has contributed the "San Marco" regiment), culminating with the valid participation of patriots - and among them not a few sailors - in the struggle for the liberation of the country.

All this would not have been possible in the military without the confidence in the fundamental qualities of the Italian people, inspired by the Allies by the Navy; it would not then extend to the political and the economic sectors.

The Navy with its attitude has established an atmosphere of trust, confirmed - it is necessary to say - from the behavior of coastal populations, with which allied troops landing came in contact. And the confidence went as far as he could, as he saw the ships in the sea, the defenses on the ground, the services of the bases and the arsenals proved that the good cause was served with fervor, so as to allow for a short time to the Allies A significant reduction of their naval forces in the Mediterranean, to concentrate on other theaters.

This multifaceted activity will be a topic for documented exposition of the following parts of this book.

## CHAPTER IV

### EVENTS IN THE BASES AND IN THE PORT

#### 17<sup>th</sup> FORWARD.

The events that occurred at the Naval Territorial Entities and the behavior of the Command and Staff were influenced by those of the Army Commanders who had territorial jurisdiction in the various coastal defense sectors; in certain locations, more than influenced, the facts about the Navy were closely related to the Army. Therefore the obedience to the orders emanating from the Supreme Heads of the Navy could not assume the ground Entities that form of total and admirable performance like that on board ships - for environmental reasons - has occurred. On the other hand, the rapid cessation of every order from the Center; Given the government's departure from Rome in the morning of September 9<sup>th</sup>, could not unduly influence the behavior of peripheral territorial authorities - political and military - suddenly placed in the face of a tricky situation that had no precedent in history. On the ships the problem was - a much easier solution: scuttle themselves in port or depart for designated ports. Some of the perplexities or difficulties encountered were also on board some naval ships or groups of ships but could be more easily tackled and overcome as outlined in the previous chapter.

It should not be forgotten, too, to realize what happened in the first 48 hours after the proclamation of the armistice, that while the Commands of the Italian Armed Forces were surprised by the announcement of the armistice with few general directives, but the German Commanders knew exactly how to settle, because on July 25<sup>th</sup>, "Operation Alarico" was conceived and studied in all its executive parts, with the purpose of preventing or repressing the probable "Italian defection". The Operation, whose directives

were applied by the Germans without hesitation, unscrupulous and with the utmost ruthlessness.

On September 8, 1943, relations between the Navy and the Army were regulated, as far as the responsibility for the defense of the maritime borders was concerned, by the "Coastal Defense Instruction" of 1931, which included the division of the coast into areas of Paramount interest of the Army or Navy. The areas (or sectors) of prime maritime interest were those involving the most important naval bases.

This organization, which had the major disadvantage of splitting the maritime frontier into areas attributed to the defensive responsibility of different armed forces with consequent operational continuity solutions along the lines of separation between zone and zone, had legitimately revealed its inefficiency in Sicily in July 1943. Nor could it be otherwise: the norm, which provided for the assumption of the sole command when intervening in a maritime sector for its defense by a Grande Unit of the Army (Article II of the Instruction), could not constitute sufficient correction, because there was a transfer of powers and responsibilities, in full operational crisis, to a Command which until then had ignored the factual situation in a part of the territory that had never been involved.

Thus, in August 1943, the Supreme Command had given directives aimed at:

- - insert the defense of the territory of jurisdiction of the Maritime Fortresses in the defensive organization of the Army, transferring the responsibility to this.
- to limit the Naval Coast's task to the essential logistics function of the naval bases, which was the reason of the bases for being, and to the *organization and preparation* of the anti-ship and anti-aircraft defense of the same locations, while - for the *operational use* of the means Fixed and mobile Ground - The Navy's territorial commands depended on the Commands of the Army Grande Units of Jurisdiction in the various areas.

The Naval Fortresses of La Spezia, La Maddalena, Taranto, Brindisi, Venice and Pola were consequently abolished. Naval bases were created in these locations, whose services would be weighted by Naval Military Commands, governed by admiral grade officers: Commands to be established where they did not already exist (and precisely in La Spezia,

Taranto and Venice, where until then the Command of the Fortresses had been at the full dependence of the Commanders of their respective Departments).

These Navy Commands had to pass - as far as they were told - to the orders of the Army Grande Unit Commands.

The new organization should have been operational by 15 September 1943, when the armistice overtook the new organization in full implementation crisis.

#### 18<sup>th</sup> EVENTS IN THE CAPITAL, CONCERNING THE NAVY.

##### *a) Transfer of command function from Supermarina-Rome to Supermarina-Brindisi.*

On August 1, 1943, instructions were issued for the defense of the Navy's offices in Rome, under the command of an admiral who would have had under his orders for this purpose a thousand armed men. There was a state of *pre - emergency* and a state of *defense*.

During the month, defense works were carried out and personal tests were carried out.

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, preparations for defending the headquarters of the Ministry (placing of a transmitting station and some machine guns) were suspended: not so in the offices of some decentralized offices and offices for space reasons and for removing from Rome targets that offered as a pretext for air strikes, such as operational commands, after which, in late 1942, Rome had been declared Open City.

Supermarina had moved on February 1, 1943 to Santa Rosa (about 20 km from the center of Rome, at Cassia Street) where Supermarina's main Naval Center was housed in the cave, together with the "country's headquarters".

However, on September 9, Supermarina had resumed working in the habitual home of the Ministry's palace, in order to avoid being cut off in view of the serious events that unfolded.

In fact, the 10<sup>th</sup> the Germans occupied - with armed forces against whom some elements of the "San Marco" regiment were not able to resist, and they went back to the Ministry after not using the apparatus [radio] - the Santa Rosa station, well-known to the Germans because they had been doing their job

at the Supermarina, the German liaison and connection officers.

The last transmission of messages by Supermarina came from Santa Rosa at 17:09 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, when it was repeated for, for the fourth time, a dispatch circulated in the clear of 16:55 so conceived: "To all merchant and warships, to all fixed rt [radio] stations - Supermarina Rome suspends communications. De Courten" (1).

Among the important communications that Santa Rosa had made in time to spread on the 10<sup>th</sup> (some of which had occasion to be mentioned by dealing with the various episodes) we still remember two circulated messages directed at all ships and transmitted between 10:15 and 10:30, With whom Supermarina informed her about the German occupation of the ports of Trieste, Monfalcone, Bari, Metcovich, Ragusa (first message); Genoa, Civitavecchia, Livorno, La Maddalena, Toulon (second message).

However, a few hours before was the Germans had been transferred to a courtyard in the palace of the Ministry (as expected) a radio station, by means of which it was possible to intercept the dispatches that crossed the ether and thus had a the idea of what was happening was to repeat the directions for the behavior to be taken before the closing of Santa Rosa.

According to testimonies of the time this auto-repeating radio activity would last - at least in reception - until September 13th. It is true that, from the collection of telecommunications in those days, the last message from Supermarina - Rome is that of 12:31 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, directed by the Rome Cipher Office to the Brindisi Office, whereby the retransmission from Brindisi to Rome of an unspecified telegram was requested, after verification of the encryption.

This telegram said: "From Marina Brindisi to Supermarina stop Send for the next message that has already been sent to Navy Cagliari stop There is a maximum urge to control the sea all around Sardinia stop General Ambrosio stop de Courten". It carried the time protocol 100511, was sent at Rome at 11:10 and repeated with identical words (except, of course, the first

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(1) This communication was signed by "Courten", as the recognized Chief of the Navy, though not in Rome but in Brindisi, where he had just arrived.

sentence) the order given to Navy Cagliari at 004011, with time protocol of 21:50 on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Germans had already occupied by the end of the day of the 9<sup>th</sup> the other 2 radio stations of the Navy: that of Monterotondo and that of San Paolo.

Of course between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, namely between the arrival in Brindisi of the King – with the President of the Council, with the military ministers and with the heads of Staff of the Armed Forces - and the cessation of any r.t. [radio] issued from Rome there was an overlapping phase between Supermarina - Rome (in the person of Adm. of the Squadron [\*\*\* Vice Adm.] Luigi Sansonetti, deputy chief of staff) and Supermarina-Brindisi (in the person of Adm. of the Div. [\*\* Rear Adm.] De Courten).

Here are the first messages sent by the radio station of Brindisi on behalf of the Supreme Military Authorities:

- 20:50 Hours of the 10<sup>th</sup>: "Maritime Recipient stop Send urgently to Navy Brindisi for the Supreme Command all news on the current situation and its subsequent developments to your knowledge and which constrains (... indecipherable ...) order Supreme Command to second Army stop General Ambrosio stop 173010". Maridalmazia [Dalmatian Navy Command] did not mark as received, nor does it appear that the dispatch was picked up.

- 04:52 Hours of the 11<sup>th</sup>: "Targeted All Department Commands and Naval Commands stop Communicate next order to all Army Commands to whom you can send it to by any telephone network stop It starts semi-stop Consider German troops as enemy troops and act as a consequence, where possible apply memo 44 communicated by Superesercito to Army Commands stop Roatta semi-stop Finishes stop de Courten stop 220010". This order was undoubtedly received only by Navy Taranto and Navy Cagliari. (1)

- 22:55 Hours of the 11<sup>th</sup>: "Navy Cagliari recipient stop Commands R. Army Commands in vicinity to urgently forward by any telephone network to his Excellency Basso [Commander

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(1) Memo 44 was not traced in any of the military archives because it was required to be destroyed with the fire after reading or applied. It contained applicative directives of Memorandum no. 1 of the Supreme Command, mentioned in paragraph 1. It can be seen that the order to apply it was issued late, because in the night from 10 to 11 September, the Germans - as you will see - had already made the masters of the situation in almost all of Italy, except in the south.

of the Armed Forces of Sardinia] orders following stop Implement measures public order memo Superesercito 44 stop Implementation must be made with maximum energy and decision stop Immediate on date of insurance stop 214511". The assurance was given by Navy Cagliari at 05:28 on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

- 23:15 Hours of the 11<sup>th</sup>: "Recipient Supermarina Rome stop Communicate Urgently with which Commands you are connected with by R.T. stop 192511 ».

This telegram is not received, nor on the other hand - as has been said - Supermarina was any more in a position to answer.

- 00:19 Hours of the 12<sup>th</sup>: "Navy Venice Communicate news that you have on hand to the trapeze [?] Also requesting it to Command R. Army and Command R. Aeronautica stop 224511".

This message was not given or received. Finally on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> Adm. Courten realized that Supermarina - Rome was certainly no longer able to work and it had to be clarified that the Navy Central Command had moved to Brindisi, compiled at 20:05 the following circular order: "All traffic directed Supermarina is supported by the radio Station of Brindisi stop 200512". This message was issued at 21:50 of the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Adm. de Courten had already, through the *Scipione*, on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> the message of Supermarina already contained in paragraph 5-d: "Germans are entering Rome station San Paolo occupied stop Predicted eventuality no longer able to exercise command stop Milan stop 192109." He had waited, however, because from the intercepts he understood that at least until a certain time of day on the 11<sup>th</sup> Supermarina-Rome was still in operation.

#### *b) Events in the Capital.*

Towards 04:00 in the morning of September 9, Adm de Courten in the absence of the departure of Badoglio; had summoned the Admirals Luigi Sansonetti (deputy chief of staff) and Emilio Ferreri (Secretary-General) and cap. vasc. [Captain] Giovanni Aliprandi (Cabinet Chief).

He had left full powers to the Adm. Sansonetti, as far as the functions of the state and the operational arrangements were concerned, and the Adm. Ferreri in terms of organization and operation

of the Ministry, with the directive to apply and enforce the clauses of the armistice loosely.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> nobody was missing in the offices of the General Staff and the Navy Ministry.

So in that crucial day Adm. Sansonetti was able to receive all the communications that came from the periphery and give all the orders needed to execute the armistice naval clauses despite the difficulties caused by the fact. That the radio station of St. Paul (occupied, as was said in the evening by the Germans) was in the area where a German division from Ostia was fighting the troops of the garrison in Rome, sent to confront it, and that the Monterotondo station had already fallen into German hands following a harsh fight in that area.

Among the general guidelines, mentioned the Adm. Sansonetti in his report on the events of those days was the one that authorized the Chiefs of Departments to depart from the Maritime Fortress in the event of an attack, in order to avoid being besieged without being able to continue to exercise command over the whole territory in their jurisdiction. Likewise the Naval Commanders were authorized to do so and not the Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, to avoid being captured after they have fulfilled their duties until the last.

Among the High Civil and Military Authorities who remained in Rome, the only one with whom Adm. Sansonetti was able to keep frequent contacts to match what to do was Gen. Giuseppe Santoro Deputy Chief of the Air Force general staff, who remained in its place after the departure of Gen. Sandalli (Minister and Chief of Aeronautics general staff) following Badoglio.

On the morning of the 10th Marshal Caviglia made the following dispatch from Supermarina to the *Scipio Africano*: "For H.M. the King I ask to your majesty given the situation in the capital that I want you to grant me temporarily powers that allow me to run the government in the absence of the president of the council stop Caviglia stop 100610."

"By midday on March 10, Marshal Caviglia," writes the Adm. Sansonetti in his mentioned report - he informed me that he wished to see me at 15:00 at the Ministry of War with the highest in officers charge of the Air Force. [For the Army there was Minister Gen. Sorice] ... For the Air Force came Chief of Cabinet Gen. Urbani. Marshal Caviglia told us that day



of the 9<sup>th</sup> ... he had learned of the departure of the high authority and the reluctance of the Ministers left in Rome to take up the direction of the Government. Having seen a clear disorientation, he had felt his duty as the highest able among the soldiers present in Rome (which was not correct because there was also Grande Admiral Revel in Rome) to assume this direction for the which he had asked telegraphic authorization of H.M. the King, what I knew to have sent to the *Scipione*.

"The King's response had not yet come, but by press of the time he considered it to be affirmative (and so it was) (1). He had so presided over the negotiations with Marshal Kesselring to come to a compromise solution concerning the city of Rome. Marshal Kesselring had allowed to deal only for the presence of Marshal Caviglia and proposed these conditions ... [see. below]. Marshal Kesselring added that ... he could not allow delay beyond the 17:00 to a definitive answer and, if not, would immediately proceed to bombing of the city and to the cutting of aqueducts.

Given the great inferiority of armaments of the national forces available to the Germans, Marshal Caviglia, supported by the opinion of the summoned military authorities, recognized that it was necessary to face the imposition, even though he doubted that the Germans would have adhered to the covenants. So the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> Rome had to capitulate on the basis of the following main clauses:

- the troops already used for the defense of Rome, within a radius of 50 km, cease hostilities against the Germans and lay down their weapons that will be handed over to the Germans;

- German troops halted on the margins of the open city of Rome, save for the occupation of the German Embassy, the broadcasting station and the German telephone exchange;

- the Italian Command has at its disposal, in addition to all police forces, an Infantry Division (the "Piave") without artillery, for the maintenance of public order.

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(1) At 16:34 the *Scipione* could convey the answer of the King: "In reply to your telegram your excellence is by me invested to be able to keep functioning government during temporary absence of the council president who is with military ministers stop Vittorio Emanuele stop 144010".

As is well known, these agreements were almost immediately violated by the Germans and began the demonstrations of bullying, harassment and cruelty that characterized Nazi occupation in occupied Italy.

He was appointed commander of the Open City Gen. Calvi di Bergolo and for each Armed Forces was appointed a Commissioner, with the administrative and conservative task of the assets of their respective Armed Forces. The Navy Commissioner was the Adm. Ferreri.

On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> Rome, there appeared unarmed soldiers of the divisions that were melting away; the influx continued intense on the 11<sup>th</sup>, creating a disorder and hardship.

The Navy had for service of the central organization about 2500 sailors, which could be held together and disciplined, also because of the personal interventions of the Adm. Ferreri, who obtained from the sailors obedience and discipline.

The Ministers who remained in Rome met twice; the presidency was assumed by the Foreign Minister Guariglia. At the last meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> it was taken note of the Order of the German Command to deliver the ministries to non-political commissioners who, at the orders of Gen. Calvi di Bergolo, to continue only and partially to pursue ordinary business affairs. Adm. Ferreri was charged with the Commissioner for the Navy.

"In the meantime, also arrived - writes Adm. Sansonetti - through the military commander of the Open City the order of dissolution of the General Staff, with the bond that none of the officers involved in the operating organs should leave Rome. Following this provision, I ordered the Navy General Staff to suspend its work and the officers to stay in their homes awaiting further arrangements. However, I placed an officer for each office to guard the archives and documents ...

"However, neither great nor small offense was made to the Ministry of the Navy, neither in those days nor in the following ...

"After finishing the feverish activity of the first two days in order to ensure the reception of the news, the editing and the transmission of orders, and to put in order the practices and documents of office, a state of inactivity had taken over which naturally had a great influence on Morale of the officers. The pain for the tragic situation that appeared was on everyone's face. Many officers were crying for the impotence in which we were reacting to increasing imposition.

"But the strength of cohesion demonstrated by our body was admirable... At one point everyone was unanimously in agreement, and it was in the will that the Navy would remain united as always and rigidly firmly at the orders of the leaders, ready to sacrifice their point of personal view and of their own interests, so that the Navy on the ground would give, as she had given to the sea, an example of unity and discipline ...

"At the time of the suspension of the work of the General Staff and since the Germanic authorities were asked for individual cooperation in the form I shall say later, I was asked to speak to the officers a word of guidance ...

"But since giving directions to the officers at a time of crisis like that of those days was a very delicate deal, you wanted to, after concretizing my thoughts and before exposing it to the officers, expose it to Grande Admiral Thaon di Revel. I asked the three Admirals of the Fleet in Rome to attend the exhibition. "

In front of the Grande Admiral, Admirals of Fleet Cavagnari, Riccardi and Iachino, and Adm. Ferreri, the 12<sup>th</sup> Adm. Sansonetti exposed - the picture of the situation and his ideas.

"After listening carefully to my exposure, the Grande Admiral made some general considerations and he concluded by saying little so: "In such delicate moments it is necessary to leave maximum freedom to consciences, provided they are sincerely turned to the good of the country. Give advice, especially since the thought of an 83-year-old man is based on assumptions other than those of young people of the new generations. I can only say how I think about it, and this is a very simple directive: I intend to keep my oath of fidelity to the King freely given in my youth ").

With this spiritual support Adm. Sansonetti on the morning of September 13 brought together all the officers in the great hall of the ministry and, in the presence of Adm. Ferreri, addressed them the following words:

"For the imposition of occupying power, the Naval State ceases all its activities. In the harsh circumstances in which we find ourselves, Adm. Ferreri - who has the responsibility of the Ministry - and I that of the General Staff, we wanted, before giving orders and directives, the advice of Grande Admiral Thaon di Revel, that the whole Navy reveres as a living example of law and patriotism. We have exposed the situation

and we have heard his word in the presence of the three highest admirals in Rome.

"As much as he told us, he fully confessed to us in the chosen course of conduct. This line of conduct can be nothing more than do what we think to be good for the Navy and Country.

"In appreciating what is beneficial and what does not benefit the interests of the Country. Everyone is free, in their own conscience, to judge as he believes. There are examples in the history of Italy, in which fervent patriots have seen the good of the Homeland in the opposite direction: each and every one in perfect good faith.

"Only the later events have established who is right, but each and every one is responsible.

"On the other hand, in our current circumstances, our will is not free. Any resistance to occupying Power would certainly be useless and probably damaging.

"As far as I am concerned, we will be asking for a form of activity that excludes direct participation in the war and will only have the purpose of maintaining the Navy's technical and administrative body.

"This form of indirect collaboration in the present circumstances must not be held in opposition to the commitments of honor taken by each of us. However, if someone in his free consciousness decides otherwise, he may at any time, with resignation, be held free from any commitment.

"On the basis of this principle, I have nominated some of the officers of the General Staff to remain in the office, and Adm. Ferreri will nominally nominate those who will remain in service at the Ministry.

"In these harsh circumstances, the Navy, on land and at sea, has proved a spirit of cohesion and discipline that moves us all. And this is the example given by the Navy that gives us the absolute certainty of the rebirth. I salute you".

This speech can be judged balanced, especially because it contains an important punctuation where Adm. Sansonetti - while leaving everyone's freedom of decision - warned that everyone would remain responsible for his behavior, however the events would turn. Of utmost effective orientation to everyone, it would have been the communication of what he himself would have decided to do; but at that moment he had not yet decided, but it would have sufficed to return to the words of the Grande Admiral

Revel, had said that he would have kept faith with his sworn oath: but perhaps he was scrupulous not to influence anyone's freedom of decision. His decision was taken later and was to leave Rome to reach the legitimate government in the south. On September 25, he departed without signing the commitment he had been asked to leave, and after 23 days of adventurous journey, he came to Apulia, resuming his duties alongside the Adm. De Courten.

In the following days, Nazi-fascist pressures began to induce officers to continue fighting alongside Germany. In this regard Adm. Sansonetti thus expresses:

"In the days following [on the 13<sup>th</sup>], along with Adm. Iachino, I continued to see the Adm. Ferreri every day, who kept us informed of the events.

"From the German side direct approaches were made to the Ministry of the Navy in a courteous manner. Marshal Kesselring had made it known that he was sorry that the Navy General Staff had been dissolved, since the order he gave concerned - in his intention - only the Army ... He asked the officers left in Central and Northern Italy to want to be freed from the loyalty to a government and a sovereign who had fled and wanted to re-engage with the German Navy. Yet, realizing our point of view, he only asked for limited technical cooperation, except for those who wanted to declare themselves for unlimited collaboration.

"Adm. Ferreri replied that he could not accept that individuals were questioned outside the hierarchical authority; he intended to deal, and he alone, with the German side and to decide what to do and what not; Who in the case of collaboration believed that he could only afford the maintenance of the administrative offices, but not the technical ones. Negotiations took place for a few days ... However, there was no agreement, but the goal was to gain time.

"In the meantime, the German Command asked to send a liaison officer to the Navy Ministry and to put down the gates to check that documents and objects were not removed". "The tone of cordiality of the first half went slowly, turning in a tone of strong pressure, but still Adm. Ferreri was always unmovable ... By September 20, we understood that the Germanic Command

would have used stronger systems to achieve its purpose.

"Adm. Ferreri then decided to ask Gen. Calvi di Bergolo to be exonerated from the position of Commissioner. But Gen. Calvi begged Ferreri to stay a few more days, informing him that a similar situation was being created on his behalf and that he had set a limit of concessions, beyond which he would not go any further despite being animated by the utmost spirit of endurance for the purpose to minimize the suffering of the Roma population.

"Meanwhile, all Navy officers in the reserve or complement called up in the capital had been dismissed by giving them a month's license with checks. The strictly necessary active service officers were left free to remain in their homes waiting for orders. The Adm. Ferreri tried to get in touch with what was left of the Navy's activity in Northern Italy, but he did not even have the exact news. Meanwhile, the upcoming creation of a new Fascist government was announced.

[It was constituted on September 23].

"It was evident that any useful action on our part would be impossible in a few days."

It was then that Adm. Sansonetti made the decision to cross the lines and reach the legitimate government in the south. Adm. Ferreri left the Commissariat on September 30, replaced by ammiraglio di squadra [Vice Adm.] Mario Falangola, passed to the pseudo - Republican Navy. Gen. Calvi di Bergolo was in turn dismissed as the Commander of the Open City of Rome on 23 September and had been "stopped" by the Germans to be transferred to the North: in his place the German General Stahel, had been installed.

To close this exhibition of events concerning the Navy in Rome, *in which the Adm. Ferreri later became the head of the clandestine resistance front*, we give some sentences of the speech made by Adm. Falangola on October 30 at a rally of officers, ordered several times for all armed forces since the first decade of October and always postponed due to the lack of influx of the summoned officers.

"I met you here at the Ministry ... to send you the order of the German Superior Commander, given to me through the Superior Commissioner Gen. Menotti Chieli, leaving tomorrow from Rome [for Florence]

at 15:00 from Tiburtina station of all the officers who were obliged to attend to this rollcall ...

... At the meeting at the stadium, there were about 150 officers involved - I always talk about the Navy - and some three or four of them were intervened... 140 officers had been ordered to leave, 28 were leaving, and how much pain and effort of persuasion on our part you can imagine ...

"The removal is determined by the consideration that they do not want to leave here officers at the disposal of any enemies that could arrive ...

"You are here about 200 - 250, let's put it; about 500 officers should have come; therefore there are already more than 200 that have not followed the order.. Worse for them ... "

Adm. Falangola also described the inexorable reprisals that the Germans would carry out with regard to the defaulters and their families. He was a mild man and a good man; Valorous submariner of the First World War; but he was convinced that the interest of the Patriarch and the Navy could be identified with loyalty to the old ally, without taking into account the situation determined after the end of the armistice.

Despite the work of persuasion of Falangola and his immediate collaborators and despite the description of the inevitable future German reprisals, many of those who were present at the meeting did not leave.

It can then be recognized that the affirmation of Adm. Sansonetti about the cohesion shown by our body responds to reality.

However, after years, one must also recognize that the vast majority of those who adhered to the social republic behaved with seriousness of intent, contributing to safeguard the patronage of the Navy in occupied Italy from the overwhelming German-Nazi invasion.

## 19<sup>th</sup> EVENTS IN THE UPPER TYRRHENIAN.

### *a) Toulon.*

The M.M. Command of Toulon, held by Adm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Pellegrino Matteucci, with jurisdiction over all of Provence [in France] and was called Mariprovenza.

Provence was considered a zone of operations *and not an occupied territory*, and the Navy armed and ruled the Fortress of Toulon, whose commander was the same Adm. Matteucci. He was subordinate to the command of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army (Gen. Vercellino) as far as territorial defense and Supermarina was concerned with maritime affairs.

Since Toulon was one of the bases of German submarines operating with the Italian Navy and was destined to become the Germanic maritime center in the Mediterranean, the Germans occupied the arsenal, which was sheltered from the damage caused by the sabotage carried out by the French Navy in November 1942.

Between Italians and Germans there was an atmosphere of good relations, if not of friendship.

Under the authority of Mariprovenza, Toulon's anti-ship and anti-aircraft defense, all local services and units, the recuperation office of the numerous French ships scuttled in the base, four French ships recovered for a long time awaiting reallocation; the Navy Command of Nice with the smaller Commands of Cannes and Menton.

Toulon military personnel included 8,436 men on 8 September, about half of them forming the garrison (under the command of gen. br. [Brigadier Gen.] Amilcare Farina, subordinate to Matteucci), with alpine elements of the M.V.S.N. [Militia] and the "San Marco" Regiment.

The Germans, though not having any batteries or other defensive installations, had concentrated in Toulon in the period immediately prior to the armistice about 11,000 men (far superior to ours, as in every location, as well as armaments); they also had an abundance of sailors in the Hyères Islands, as many as 8,000. They had justified this influx of force with the argument that by September 10, the forces of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army would have cleared the western area of the Var, except Toulon which would pass with Italian elements dependent on Adm. Matteucci to the orders of the Germanic authorities, whose supreme leader was Field Marshal von Rundstedt, commander of Germanic troops in France; another justification had been to strengthen the defense of Provence in the case of an enemy landing.

Shortly before midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Adm. Matteucci received the Order of Supermarina, already reproduced in paragraph 3, which required him to reach the nearest Italian port for efficient national ships, to sink the inefficient ones and not to concern themselves with the former French.



Already at 22:00 he had been able to speak by telephone with Rome and had had from Supermarina the order "to surrender the Toulon Fort to the Germanic military authorities and to request the free passage of the Fort's garrison for their return to Italy", order confirmed by Radio-telegraph.

But at 22:00 German units, with lightning maneuver, already occupied and guarded quays and ships and blocked the exit from the port of Toulon, and they were occupying the entire Fortress. Given this situation, the ceding of the base had in fact been done on a Germanic unilateral initiative and it was no longer possible to think of starting ships that can take to the sea. It was also difficult to implement scuttling under the German watchdogs without causing the violent reaction resulting in the impossibility of it carrying out. However, the admiral, by virtue of the crew's ability, succeeded in sinking the two M.A.S. present, which were the only warships of some value existing at that time in Toulon, in addition to the only military tugboat.

At 01:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> the Admiral began an interview, lasting three quarters of an hour, with the two commanders land and sea of the German forces normally assigned to Toulon. The conversation took place in Fort Lamalgue, where the telephone center was located: the Germans stood firm in their requests but courteous in form, while the fort was surrounded by tanks.

The procedures for the ceding of defenses and facilities at Fortress were agreed to.

To the admiral, who was virtually captive, he was left free to provide the necessary arrangements to all the dependent entities, which are based on the criterion of safeguarding as far as possible the dignity of our land and sea troops. He managed to get the tanks out of the fort, which he estimated as an expression of an intimidating threatening offensive.

Concerning the freedom of transit to Italy for all soldiers, for the ultimate transfer operations, and having the two German representatives not able to decide on the pretext of not having orders, the Admiral managed to send to Paris for the Headquarters General of von Rundstedt the cap. freg. [Lt. Commander] Renato Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo (1), who was in Toulon and was a liaison officer between the 4<sup>th</sup> Army and Von Rundstedt, to resolve the issue at the highest German authority in France territory.

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(1) Brother of the Colonel murdered at the Fosse Ardeatine.

Von Rundstedt replied to Cordero, who was aware of the events of Toulon, and who, knowing how the Italian Navy had behaved with dignity and without conscience, was delighted to meet the expressed wishes, but given the evolution of the General situation - with acts of hostility in various areas against the Germans – it was not possible to do so.

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Admiral departed from his assembled staff, to whom he had already spoken in the morning the Dupty Chief of staff Captain of corvette [Lt. Commander] Vittorio Tognelli (being the Chief of Staff, cap. Vasc. [Capitan] Giuseppe Maroni Ponti); He gave his men three "orders":

- always go head-on, by the evidence of valor and capabilities taken in 39 months of fighting on the sea
- obeying higher orders without debate, although he had been fighting for over three years alongside the Germans;
- do not abandon their men, at least as long as they remained in Toulon (special orders for officers).

Toulon's staff remained disciplined and refused any invitation to co-operate, resisting the pressures and flatteries of the Germans; there were few exceptions that occurred after the Admiral's departure.

He was transferred to prison in the night between 10 and 11, from Fort Lamalgue in a neighboring country and the 13<sup>th</sup> to Lyon together with Gen. Farina. Hence, along with various Generals, Adm. Matteucci was brought to Vittel in Germany on October 13, where he remained until February 2, 1944, the day he was transferred to the Verona prison.

Carried out on April 8 in Parma he was prosecuted and acquitted, despite his loyal and proud attitude; perhaps precisely because of this, along with the fact that the socialist republic had no alleged crimes to charge to him.

All the rest of the staff ended up in prison camps, except the few adherents and those who managed to escape capture.

*b) Genoa.*

In Genoa amm. div. [Rear Adm.] Carlo Pinna was Commander of the Navy and Superior Commander of the Port.

As soon as it was learned from the broadcast, the news of the implantation of the armistice asked by telephone for orders to the Command in Chief of La Spezia, then conferred with the amm. div. [Rear Adm.] Luigi Biancheri commander

of the 8<sup>th</sup> Naval Division there moored, and finally went to the Territorial Commander of Genoa Gen. Coppi.

At 08:30 hours he had already executed all the provisions he had received, that is, the departure of all efficient military and merchant ships, scuttling of ineffective military ships, sabotage of inefficient merchant ships, communication with the German Navy Command to bring German ships out of the port.

The Territorial Commander, who had only two badly armed battalions on the spot, found that he was not able to resist the German troops, who were already at the gates of Genoa at 4:00, numerous and well-armed, and that at 06:00 blocked access to the port and were occupying all shipyards.

At 7:00 he could inform Adm. Sansonetti of the Genoa situation, now irretrievably compromised, and had permission to move away to escape capture.

After gathering his staff, leaving him free and carrying out the prescribed destruction operations of secret documentation and securing cash funds, he left at 10:00 with the train to Florence, where he remained until the liberation of Tuscany, The establishment and activity of Brigade V as an influential member.

Among the episodes in Genoa, it is worth remembering that of the minelayer Pelagosa of about 600 tons. This ship, received the order to leave as soon as possible the port by heading for La Spezia or Livorno, departed at 08:00 on 9 September. He had just crossed the line of obstructions when he was hit by the German heavy machine gun fire and then by the Germans in possession of batteries. Repeatedly struck, in the process of sinking, he had the crew abandon ship. The officer in 2<sup>nd</sup>, sten. vasc. [Ensign] Giovanni Rella was in command, not having aboard the commander ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Giovanni D'Aste, who was in the city, not returning in time to reach the ship before leaving the moorings, because he had not been warned of her imminent departure.

*c) La Spezia.*

Even in La Spezia, the situation fell on September 9<sup>th</sup>, so that the Commander in Chief of the Department had to

leave the venue on the 10<sup>th</sup> after having executed Supermarina orders, both as regards the large number of ships present, and the use of the arsenal's facilities, basins and machinery: previewed made unusable for a duration of 15 days by order the Command in Chief. (1)

The only communication, which Adm. Maraghini managed to make was a phone call to Supermarina, that is, at 10:15 of September 9<sup>th</sup>, so recorded: "Bergamini ships departed stop All minor ships departed stop Ships not in condition to move sunk ships Mercantile vessels are departing semi-stop some are useless semi-stop on three German steamers the machine guns weaponry made useless stop Outside the German troop mass in large quantities stop Decima Flottmas destroys material stop From Genoa almost no mercantile was able to leave semi-stop there is no news what has been done in time to make useless".

In summary the events in La Spezia took place as follows.

Four German divisions, which should have contributed to countering a possible allied landing in the area in which the Maritime Fortress of La Spezia was located, had moved - to occupy it - a little before the announcement of the armistice. These Divisions, interposing with robust elements among the units of the Divisions "Rovigo" and "Alpi Graie", constituting the XVI Army Corps under the command of Gen. Carlo Rossi, who was entrusted with the defense of the territory including the Fortress, made it possible to swiftly fell almost without a fight.

Because the three Commands of the Grande Army Units (that of the Corps and those of the two divisions) were located within the limits of the Fortress, to Adm. Maraghini it was ready - returning on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> from the meeting in Rome described in paragraph 2 - meeting immediately with the Gen. Rossi to define the methods of defense in a situation that suddenly overturned the one that had been underway for over three years.

Adm. Maraghini had returned from Rome with precise directions; Gen. Rossi had not yet received it, and although La Spezia had established that the new organization of the Commanders with its passage of orders and responsibilities (paragraph 17)

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(1) The brevity of this time limit was probably due to the confidence that the Allies, given the power of their means, resolved in a matter of weeks the problem of the expulsion of Germanic forces from Italian territory.

was supposed to get into operation at zero hour on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the general did not estimate that events could become so seriously localized in the few hours for extraordinary measures, anticipating taking command at zero hour on the 9<sup>th</sup>, expected by the rest of the art. 11 of the aforementioned "Coastal defense Instructions" still in force for the only day of 9 September.

In the meantime, only the deployment of some units of seamen at certain points and the assignment, to the guard of some strong points, awaiting a regiment expected from Turin on the 9<sup>th</sup> from the *Rovigo* Division. The regiment could of course not arrive in La Spezia and take position before German troops occupied the city.

As for the ships that were in La Spezia, after those who could leave that base, they were almost all timely sabotaged or sunken, depending on the possibilities in relation to the place they were. It was 56 ships, including 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 6 torpedo boats, 3 corvette, 3 submarines, and auxiliary and minor ships.

*d) Livorno.*

In Livorno, the various operational responsibilities were so distributed between the Army and Navy Authority.

The Naval Command of Livorno (contramm. [Commodore] Romolo Polacchini) did not have coastal defense and anti-aircraft. This was devolved to the Harbor Defense Command by a colonel of the Army (Brogi), dependent on the Command of the Coastal Division headquartered in Pisa.

Navy-Livorno's responsibilities were limited to the foundation and protection of traffic in the Tuscan Archipelago to Corsica and Sardinia, to the obstructions and dredging of security routes, to the operation of local logistic services and to a certain extent to the defense of the harbor with the few weapons and the searchlights he had. He had full control over the Command's staff, the Capitaneria [harbor office] and the Military Engineers for the Navy. On Naval Academy and the Technical Bodies for the Control of Military Buildings entrusted to the Orlando Cantiere [dock yard] the Navy Command exercised disciplinary supervision only.

In all, the Command had 1000 men, but only 270 rifles, of which a hundred refitted to 7.5 mm without ammunition.

As soon as he had news of the end of the armistice, Adm. Polacchini provided such arrangements to maintain calm and discipline among the staff, fully achieving the purpose. He tried to get orders by calling Rome and La Spezia and at 23:00 Adm. Maraghini told him to be ready to make the dispossession (which he communicated) when he received the conventional message "Apply public order no. 1".

During the night from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Maraghini informed him of the most important events (departure of the fleet to the south and the departure of the King and of the Government of the "towards the village of D'Annunzio).

The German Chief of Staff of Polacchini was Captain Diederich, commander of the Germanic Navy in Livorno. Between the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup>, he tried in vain several times to bring him to the Navy Command to confer with him and encourage him to remove the German ships, assuring him that no attack would have come to them if not provoked. When Diederich decided to let him know that he would come to him at 22:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup> in the house of Antignano where the Admiral's lived, these - warned that at 18:00 fourteen German armored cars had accompanied a lieutenant, *peaceful* messenger of Captain Diederich, to inform him that he had decided to occupy the Navy Commander - moved to friends at Montenero: and he did well, because instead of the German captain, a armored cars unit had the order to capture him and who took prisoner the personnel he had left to guard the house.

What had the admiral done in the first 48 hours from the armistice, to provoke such a prodigal action by the Germans, an action that he persecuted - even with 5 months in prison - Adm. Polacchini until the liberation, after he had managed to reach Venice where he had his family?

During the night September 8 - 9, he repeatedly telephoned the German Navy Command and twice sent his Chief of Staff (cap. freg. [Commander] Roberto Servadio Cortesi) to communicate what he wanted to discuss with Captain Diederich, he got a feeling from the Chief of Staff that the Germans seemed to be preparing a coup, had immediately issued the order to withstand the maximum energy and to fall back on the Navy Command in case of defeat in the face of superior forces. Finally, he had everything set up for public order no. 1 as soon as it was executed, with particular regard to departures, sabotage or sinking of the navy.

At dawn on the 9<sup>th</sup>, there were some movements of German ships in the harbor, but soon they turned out to be aimed not at departure but on the occupation of the port entrance, which they achieved by firing against the boats - gating the obstructions, capturing them and replacing them with Germanic landing craft.

While this was happening, the telephone order had come from La Spezia, given by Adm. Maraghini in person, to apply public order no. 1. The Navy command had issued the executive order, but it was too late because the Germans had swiftly attacked the city and the harbor, preventing any Italian action.

So the sabotage of the military ships present, which were either in work or under construction, could not have been implemented.

During the 9<sup>th</sup>, the overwhelming German predominance had settled decisively and the only thing the admiral had been able to do was to give orders to some coastal batteries, though not dependent on him but by Colonel Brogi, to intervene in Defense of *Buffoluto* and *Foscari* during the actions we have described: and in fact the batteries had fired a few shots without apparent result.

Before retiring to Montenero Adm. Polacchini had arranged to destroy the secret archive and save the cash funds, with whom he could pay his men for a few weeks after having saluted them and left them free, keeping them at their arraignment in a new refuge found in nearby Castiglioneccello.

It was precisely the order to shoot against the two German ships in action against *Buffoluto* and *Foscari*, who in all probability caused Germanic wrath against Adm. Polacchini.

*e) Elba - Piombino area.*

As for the Elba - Piombino operating zone, on September 8, 1943, it was divided between two distinct Navy Commands: the Naval Command of Portoferraio (cap. vasc. [Captain] Michelangelo Fedeli), dependent on the use of the defense means by the Command of the Troops in Elba (gen. br. [Brigadier Gen.] Achilles Gilardi); The Navy Command of Piombino (cap. freg. [Commander] Amedeo Capuano) similarly dependent on the Local Coastal Sector Command (gen. br. [Brigadier Gen.] Fortunato Perni). Both of them had jurisdiction over the Command of the 215<sup>th</sup> Coastal Division, commanded by Lieutenant General of the militia De Vecchi di Valcisman (former governor of the Dodecanese in the early months of the war). In turn, the 215<sup>th</sup> Division depended on the II Corps.

The defense of the Elba included 8 pieces of 152 in two batteries and 7 batteries anti-ship and anti-aircraft with 28 pieces of 102 and of 76 mm.; that of Piombino consisted of 8 pieces of 88 on two Army manned batteries and 12 pieces of 102 and 76 in three batteries manned by the Navy, as well as a few 20 machine guns in close proximity.

As soon as he had news of the armistice, the Navy Command of Portoferraio oriented to resistance to the Germans, subject to the orders that the Command of the troops would give. "To avoid German surprises, orders were given to the Army units and naval and terrestrial artillery to fire on any ship or barge approaching the coast, establishing Portoferraio's harbor as the only landing on the island. During the night, any boat approaching had to be considered an enemy."

A dozen sailors of the Germanic Navy were arrested at the r.t. [radio-telegraph] station, the only ones who were on Elba.

On the afternoon of September 10 Adm. Nomis had gathered at the Navy Command all the Navy and Army commanders (as mentioned in paragraph 10). Present, to take the measures necessary to deal with the situation, when Supermarina's order to leave for the south with all the ships he left to the Gen. Gilardi the responsibility of the command.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, after the departure of the Torpedo Division, they remained in Portoferraio: the torpedo boats *Ardito* and *Impavido*, and the escort ship *Grimani* (who would have to continue south as soon as possible), a Mas, two submarines and a few merchant ships.

The two submarines departed on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the Mas moved to Corsica.

Gen. Gilardi also immediately assumed an attitude of active resistance to the Germans, comforted on the 12<sup>th</sup> even by a decision of a group of personalities in Portoferraio who, on behalf of the population, with the mayor at the head, declared to be town ready to defend itself.

Fall of Piombino on the evening of September 11, due to the collapse of the weak coastal division in the face of Germanic prevalence, the danger for the Elbe became more serious.

Several times the Germans tried to invade by sea between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup>, and the Navy helped make the attempts fail:

- shortly after the dawn of September 10, firing with Enfolà's 152 mm. battery against six landing craft laden with troops, presented in front of the Procchio Gulf;



- in the night between 13 and 14 September, firing against other approaching landing craft near Calamita point and Cape Stella with the Calamita point 152 battery;
- in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, intervening against other landing craft again with this battery and with one of 76 set up at Longone point;
- towards noon on the 15<sup>th</sup>, fire on light German ships attacking Palmaiola;
- in the afternoon of the same 15<sup>th</sup>, once again against landing craft between Cape Stella and Calamita point with the 152 battery mounted on this tip.

Meanwhile, on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, the r.t. Center of Brindisi had established contact with Portoferraio Station and had the following exchange of messages:

- 11:30 hours of the 12<sup>th</sup>: Portoferraio Navy to Taranto Navy stop Piombino occupied this night by German troops stop Elba still free lacks food stop Urge English landing operation area Piombino resulting imminent German invasion island Elba.
- 22:47 hours of the 12<sup>th</sup>: Navy Portoferraio to Supermarina Brindisi stop Considering the next probable attempt to occupy the island of Elba by the German who already occupies Piombino urgently urge occupation by the English stop In the harbor there are two inefficient torpedo boats and a Mas and some steamships stop We suspect near exhaustion of Food supplies.
- 11:00 of the 13<sup>th</sup>: Supermarine to Navy Portoferraio stop Tell to army troops command that it is not permitted to allow German landing on Elba stop The Islet is equipped to oppose English landing and more strongly must oppose a few German means stop Naval ships prevent Germans from traffic between continent and Elba stop Already requested aid.

In fact, no German was able to set foot in the island; only on the islets of Palmaiola and Cerboli, two German detachments landed at noon on the 13<sup>th</sup>, but on the following night Palmaiola was re-occupied with elements sent from Portoferraio. It was very important to restore our control over the island from which it was possible to watch the Piombino channel.

Meanwhile, by the Command of the 215<sup>th</sup> Coast Division, which had ordered on September 9 to react to the actions of the Germans,

had arrived in the morning the order to cease all armed resistance and to contact the German Commanders in order to reach peaceful agreements. But, as has already been mentioned, Gen. Gilardi adopted a line different from that of the Division Command and De Vecchi at 01:05 of the 12<sup>th</sup> telegraphs: "Orders given from me correspond to higher orders stop Acting otherwise, you will assume responsibility".

In order to increase the contribution of the defense of Elba, Gen. Gilardi ordered the disembarkation from the *Ardito* and from the *Impavido* of the machine guns and their putting them in place on the eastern coast of the island; Nor did they want to allow them to go south, as had prepared by Adm. Nomis (paragraph 10 and 12-a).

The contrast of German landings continued successfully - as it was seen - until the 15<sup>th</sup>, in spite of the fact that the Germans incited the defenders of the island with air dropped leaflets to pass by their side.

Indeed, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Commander Fedeli had confirmed to the ships' to react to every German attack and in case of necessity of scuttling rather than falling into the hands of the enemy.

On the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, two German officers accompanied by an Italian [Army] Captain of the Command of II Corps, who had sent a letter from the Division Command, requested to surrender the island, appeared. Gen. Gilardi replied with a refusal, and the two parliamentarians, he takes note, withdrew.

On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Portoferraio was bombed and had, in addition to numerous injuries, about 100 dead and 150 wounded. Leaflets launched with bombs threatened in the form of ultimatum the continuation of the bombing if the yield had not been completed by 16:00.

Then Gen. Gilardi, faced with the pressures of the people's representatives and the objective assessment of the impossibility of continuing to resist, especially because of the lack of air forces and the inability to receive supplies from Tuscany now in the hands of the Germans, resolved to accept the German ultimatum. At 16:00 he sent his delegates to Piombino and so on September 17, German units went on to occupy Elba, landing on various stretches of the coast and parachuting on some points inside. Following the surrender conditions, Commander Fedeli had to order the ships on the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> to not to scuttle, to avoid damaging them and not reacting to German actions.

So ended the resistance carried out for 8 days by the garrison of Elba. The Navy Command could only obey. The only thing that would be good to do, forcing the hand of the troop leader, would be to start at least two torpedoes and auxiliary cruiser, taking into account that their use at sea - especially after landing the light weapons - would not have contributed to defense, especially as the two torpedoes were in a state of disastrous efficiency.

It was mentioned that Piombino fell on the night of the 12<sup>th</sup>, following the surrender negotiations on the 11<sup>th</sup> between the Command of the 215<sup>th</sup> Coast Division and the German Command.

Also in Piombino cap. freg. [Commander] Amedeo Capuano, Commander of the Navy, had not accepted the order of surrender given by Gen. De Vecchi, but not protected by the sea, as was the garrison of Elba, his resistance could not last but for a short while.

First, however, to expose what was happening in Piombino, we reported the exchange of two official letters on September 10 between Gen. Perni (commander of the Piombino sector) and cap. freg. [Commander] Capuano: they are very interesting, because they give a precise idea of the divergence between De Vecchi and Capuano and the firm character of the latter.

*a) Letter 128/RP on 10-Sept-43 from the Piombino Sector Command to the R. Navy Command, and c. c. to the Command 215<sup>th</sup> Coastal Division.*

By order of the Command of the 215<sup>th</sup> Coastal Division, Frigate [Commander] Captain Capuano leaves from this moment the Navy Command of Piombino to the Captain of Corvette [Lt. Commander] Pellizzetti.

Commander Capuano will travel to the 14<sup>th</sup> coastal regiment command in Poggio di Follonica, reporting to commander Colonel Calvi as soon as possible.

signed Gen. FORTUNATO PERNI

*b) Answer 76/RP to the previous letter and c. c. to Command 215<sup>th</sup> Coastal Division – 16:00 hrs 10 September 1943.*

1 - Reference no. 128/RP on 10 - Sept - 43 received at 14:30 today.

*a) I underline the fact that my destination as Commander of Navy Piombino was decreed by the Ministry*

of the Navy from which I am dependent on my superior Naval Authority, because I have to answer, as the main task, the Services of R. Navy here and of the superior military command of the port, of which I have full and absolute responsibility.

b) Also relying on the 215<sup>th</sup> Coastal Division and the Local Garrison for a complementary task than my main responsibility mentioned in a).

2 - I underline that only the Ministry of the Navy directly or through its employees can order my dismissal from the position of Navy Commander here.

Before surrendering to Navy of Piombino's Command to the Captain of Corvette Pellizzetti Pilade I remain in my seat until the Navy Ministry has decreed to exonerate me from the responsibility of that charge.

*Il cap. di freg.*  
Commander  
*signed* AMEDEO CAPUANO

In this attitude cap. freg. [Commander] Capuano had been comforted by his opinion by Adm. Nomis, whom the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> had addressed as the highest able among those present at Elba, to keep him informed of the events at Piombino and to coordinate the operational activity on both sides of the Channel.

The blame made by the local Authority of the Army to Commander Capuano was lacking in the spirit of collaboration. Certainly he refused to cooperate in the transfer of arms to the Germans, as his precise duty to obey the orders contained in the proclamation of Marshal Badoglio announcing the armistice and the subsequent communications received by the Navy Authorities.

In the port of Piombino on September 8 there were 10 German landing craft with about 400 men on board, 4 minesweepers and 5 Italian axillaries.

Commander Capuano, concerned by this concentration, he informed Supermarina as soon as he heard the Badoglio statement and was told to persuade the Germans to leave, which they promised to do next morning.

At the dawn of the 9<sup>th</sup>, however, the captain of the port signaled to Commander Capuano that the German ships had the crews on deck with the individual weapons in hand and with those of the ships pointed

on the Italian ships and the machineguns set up to defend the port, that German units had disarmed an Army officer and sentinels on the pier, a Germanic unit marching toward the light house and the machine guns, and another unit was heading towards the Capitaneria [Harbor master's office]. Then Commander Capuano immediately opened fire on the German ships.

Four landing craft were sunk in the harbor and another damaged sank in the Piombino Channel after the others had left. carrying also the staff of those sunk. Needless to say, Gen. Perni tried to convince Commander Capuano to suspend the shooting, promising to send some of our tanks to the port and simultaneously to deal with the Germans.

Towards 02:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, two torpedo boats and a German steamer came in front of Piombino asking to go in for supplies. They were granted by Gen. Perni, who also allowed - against the opinion of Commander Capuano - that some unarmed German signalists take service at the lighthouse. Meanwhile, the senior captain of torpedoes had conferred with the Gen. Perni, without appearing to Commander Capuano, who was the military commander of the harbor.

At noon the three German ships had finished filling up and Capuano had urged them to move away to avoid any new incidents, especially as four Italian motosiluranti [MTB] arrived, while the guns of the German ships were aimed at them: of course, Commander Capuano had a sense of danger and being ready to react, avoiding being scuttled, or even, captured.

For each event, Elba's Navy Command was informed, and for information, for his part, Gen. Perni. It was precisely at 13:30 on that day of the 10<sup>th</sup> that the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pellizzetti was called by Gen. Perni, and that he sent to Commander Capuano the letter of removal, which we replied with the firm response of the commander.

After sunset, one of the German torpedo boats came out of the harbor, crossing in the vicinity. The other torpedo ship left the mooring in front of the harbor. The steamer stayed in the moorings. Commander Capuano immediately ordered to illuminate the German ships with the searchlights and to be ready to react with armed batteries from the Navy.

Suddenly the two torpedo boats opened fire against the projectors and batteries, which reacted immediately with the help of armed forces from the Army.

The result of the fight was catastrophic for the Germans: a torpedo boats and the steamer went down, while the other torpedo boats went away in the night with such serious damage as the corvette and torpedo boats *Animoso*, sent by Adm. Nomis sought her at the request of Commander Capuano, to give her the *coup de grace* (see paragraph 10) did not find it because she had gone down.

During this fortunate affair in which the antithesis was made manifest between the proud behavior of the Navy Command and the Command of the Army, to Piombino was flown on the 10<sup>th</sup> from Florence by 52 Italian tanks, which did not carry out any activity because the Command of the II Corps, and therefore of the 215<sup>th</sup> Division, were now oriented towards the peaceful transfer to the Germans of the territory in their jurisdiction.

On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> the defensive organization of the Army in Piombino's sector collapsed, the Commanders had left, and when Commander Capuano saw it, he had no chance of giving resistance on the ground because his batteries had the A field of limited restraint by the sea, gathered his men and left them free with regular licenses, and destroyed the secret documents and in the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup>, when Piombino was completely occupied by German troops, He moved himself away, handing over to the commissioner of the Prefecture of Comune the flag of the Command to keep it safe.

The cap. freg. [Commander] Capuano was promoted for merit of war when Piombino's events could be seen.

## 20<sup>th</sup> THE EVENTS IN THE LOWER TYRRHENIAN.

### A) *Civitavecchia*.

Since this was not an area of primary military importance, there was no Army Operation Command, and the functions of the Navy Command were limited to mine sweeping, forensic vigilance, control and defense of traffic, indeed modest.

So, when in the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, a German tanks rolled onto the docks of the port across the city completely devoid of

defenders, the few modest tonnage ships that were in the moorings - most damaged by air bombings or inefficient - were caught by surprise and their crew did not have time to take any measures to prevent them from falling intact in to the enemy's hands.

Two VASs [MTBs], two small steamships and some trawlers were captured. The mine sweepers were fortunately in service along the safety routes southwards.

The absence of the Commander of the Navy (c. amm. [Commodore] Carlo De Bei), who had left for a brief two-day permit just in the afternoon of 8 September, contributed to making the Command less efficient, and the Armistice Announcement limited to avoid dispersion between the staff and did not think to give immediate orders for to make unusable the inefficient ships and for the departure of those in moveable conditions; In fact, he called in the port VAS 303, which was the only one in the sea for anti-sub vigilance service (in addition to the mine sweepers, too slow and too far to be able to return within a few hours).

*b) Gaeta.*

In the paragraph 12- g we saw how the corvettes *Gru*, *Gabbiano* and *Pellicano* left Gaeta a few hours after the announcement of the armistice, at the same time as Sub *Axum*. On the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> also the hospital ship *Toscana*, who was in the harbor, departed under orders of Supermarina to Palermo, where they arrived the next day. Staying in Palermo until the 13<sup>th</sup>, where he left again on the 16<sup>th</sup> for Taranto, arriving on the 18<sup>th</sup> after being attacked by a German plane that threw some bombs without hitting it.

Of the few other auxiliary ship present in Gaeta at the proclamation of the armistice, the most important was the *Quarnaro* (1) workshop ship, which depended on the Navy Command. The commander was on mission in Rome and the ship was responsible for the commander in 2<sup>nd</sup>, cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Aniello Guida.

Gaeta was also the base of the I Motor Torpedo Boat flotilla, which had moved from Messina - to the base of the II flotilla M.A.S. [MTB] - after the allied occupation of Sicily: the commander of both flotillas was cap. freg. [Commander] Alessandro Michelagnoli. There

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(1) Corvette and Submarine, thanks to their diesel engines, could quickly take off. The *Quarnaro*, on the other hand, could not get away in time, because his steam engine of the old-fashioned type required about 18 hours to get ready to move.

on the evening of 8 September, three Ms [MTB] were in Gaeta: the 55 and the 64 boats were efficient and the 71 were under going work, in addition to the M.A.S. 544 [MTB] in the works.

The commander of Navy Gaeta was the cap. freg. [Commander] Mariano De Martino, while the commander of the garrison was Colonel of the Army Nicolò Rattazzi; Both dependent on the 4th coastal regiment, with the Command residing at Itri.

The forces available to the Navy Command and the Command of the garrison were very modest: few hundred men (with insufficient number of rifles and some machine guns), of which one could not be distracted by the service of the four existing factories military guards in Gaeta. All telegraphic connections were interrupted and therefore no directive could reach the two Commands from the outside.

At 02:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup> there was a German air strike and immediately afterwards German soldiers began to flow to the quay to which the *Quarnaro* was moored, while others were surprised at the marina's barracks, seizing automatic weapons and rifles without encountering opposition, because the staff was still in the anti-aircraft shelter.

But the staff succeeded in retaking the barracks with strong force.

Thus a struggle - with dead and wounded on both sides - came to light, to which the *Quarnaro* also took part, against whom the Germans had opened fire. Meanwhile, another skirmish occurred in the Serapo area, where the staff of the motor torpedo base of the Mas rejected some Germanic patrols.

On the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> the situation was re-established in our favor when the Germans reopened the shooting, also using some light cannons, which hit the *Quarnaro* several times, while Italian soldiers had to cope with other threats from prisoners in criminal establishments.

At 11:00, two German officers were presented to the garrison's Command to demand the cessation of hostilities and the resulting occupation of the city, subject to the bombing of the abode. The colonel did not adhere until he was authorized by the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> regiment at Itri, where he sent an official with the German parliamentarians. Arrived at 14:00 the order to cease the resistance, brought by the returning officer from Itri, the colonel made the following arrangements.

Meanwhile, Formia had fallen, and along the Formia - Gaeta coast overwhelmingly motorized and mechanized forces had threatened to march toward Gaeta.



Thus Colonel Rattazzi comments on Gaeta's surrender: "The fire ceased at 12 noon, awaiting the return of Itri's parliamentarians, and at 14.00 after the colonel's response the Colonel Musei ceased to resist. I can say that this resistance, made by a garrison lacking arms, was beset by an overwhelming enemy for men and by means during about 12 hours and ceased when Formia had fallen and every hope of receiving reinforcements had vanished ... I have judged That with the only means available, illusory in comparison with those of the enemy, and after what had happened to Formia, I could no longer delay the yield, since in my negative response the Germans would shell and bomb the city with serious losses to the civilian population. I made that decision with full conscience of a soldier ... Commander De Martino approved the decision taken, kept in touch with me until the moment of surrender and from his office he informed me as much as possible about the situation. We cooperated in full agreement to comply in the best possible way and with the few means available to the order of S.E.”.

Arms delivery took place on the evening of 9 September; Naval personnel handed them over to a German unit accompanied by an officer of the garrison. However they did care to hide a good part of their ammunition.

The men were allowed to reach their families after having been supplied with food for two or three days.

As for the few naval ships present at the time of surrender, all in work except the *Quarnaro*, fell into the hands of the Germans before they had time to scuttle. Commander De Martino had the phonogram on the end of the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> of the ending of the resistance with the clarification that the ships after handing over weapons and ammunition would allow a German patrol to remain on board for surveillance, while commanders and crews would continue to carry out their service. But, of course, it could not happen that the vigilant patrol would turn into a capture unit.

The *Quarnaro*, with 20cm of water under the keel, was unable to scuttle, but was greatly damaged by the shots received. It was by the Germans sunk on September 22 at the entrance to the port of Gaeta to obstruct it.

In the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> he came from (where there was an operational base for Ms and Mas) a group of 7 motor torpedo boats of the I<sup>st</sup> Flotilla, led by cap. vasc. [Captain] Mimbelli (commander of two

months of the M.A.S. Group operating) who - ignorant of the fall of Gaeta - had decided to bring together all the flotilla's motor torpedo boats, in the presumption of being able to easily communicate with Rome, which from Capri was not possible.

Commander Michelagnoli, who had already set the Ms 55 and 64 off for Ponza, informed Commander Mimbelli of the situation, and then he decided to continue for Fiumicino with only one of his motor torpedo boats (Ms 54) in order to land and reach Rome to get in touch with Central Authorities, while cap. freg. [Commander] Michelagnoli arrived at Ponza with the another seven motor torpedo boats. From Ponza, he went on to Capri for a while, leaving Ponza with Ms 64 and Ms 35 who were not in full efficiency, with the order to support on the Cov. *Gru* who was there and to continue with her for Palermo (paragraph 12 - g). Ms 55, who moved from Gaeta to Ponza away from the group, headed for Portoferraio where, following the orders of Admiral Nomis, followed the events of the Torpedo Division.

Commander Michelagnoli arrived in Capri with 6 motor torpedo boats on 17:10 of the same day of the 10<sup>th</sup>, reached by Ms 54 who had carried out his mission of carrying cap. vasc. [Captain] Mimbelli.

It should be remembered that when the 7 motor torpedo boats presented themselves with. cap. vasc. [Captain] Mimbelli at Gaeta, Commander De Martino was in his office with a German officer, by which he was explaining certain ways of yielding. The German told him that the MTBs had to be disarmed and delivered; Commander De Martino was afraid to issue orders in the direction required by the German officer and instead, in communicating to Commander Mimbelli the situation, he suggested that he immediately depart with all the boats to avoid capture.

*c) Naples and the Gulf area.*

Adm. sq. [Vice. Adm.] Ferdinand Casardi was Commander in Chief of the Department, but Naples being not a maritime stronghold the defense of the territory was completely devolved to the Army.

However, in view of the enormous importance that Naples had assumed since June 10, 1940, as the main terminal port of traffic with North Africa, the Navy manned with its own personnel the anti-aircraft defense batteries, the harbor accommodations, beyond - of course - all the facilities and technical services

and logistic services for port activities and for the operation of maritime traffic.

Naples had suffered numerous massive air bombardments during the conflict. At the date of the armistice, the Command in Chief headquarters (which had to move to San Vittore del Lazio, in the Montecassino area) was reduced with a few still usable rooms; The Naval Base offices, warehouses and equipment and most of the private industrial facilities that worked for the Navy were almost completely destroyed; Sunken hulks, the severely damaged harbor and the wreckage of ships of all sizes; etc.

If the consequences of such a loss had not been felt at a rate comparable to that with which the ruin increased with the succession of air strikes, this was due to the continuing decline in needs. In fact, in August 1943, Naples's naval traffic was reduced to almost zero after the loss of North Africa and Sicily.

Adm. Casardi returned to Naples from the Rome meeting of 7 September on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> with the order not to start transferring to San Vittore due to the uncertainty of the situation, issued his dispositions to the staff, but could not Communicate with Gaeta and the islands due to the telephone breaks caused by previous bombings.

On the same morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> it was reported that a Allied Force approached the Gulf of Salerno that evening began disembarking.

The news of the armistice provoked a sense of relief throughout the city, with popular manifestations of joy.

"In the night, the news of the armistice became official", wrote the Adm. Casardi - presented in my office, in a rigid but courteous form, the Germanic Naval Commander Palmgren, liaison officer and Chief of Staff at this Headquarters Command, to say in German that "Germany was now alone to fight and therefore its defense would have been more difficult, that he nevertheless hoped for good fortune to our country and hoped that we would not have taken a hostile attitude against the Germans". I replied in his own language, thanking him for his wish and saying that if the Germans had abstained from acts of hostility towards the Nation, nothing against them would be done by myself and my employees. Useless words. I knew then that Palmgren remained in Naples until the last day, and he certainly directed the acts of destruction in the competence of the Navy [ie those acts

prepared for the case that the Anglo - Americans had attacked Naples as enemies]".

"Unnecessary words," and at 20:40 on September 8<sup>th</sup>, the Germans made a brief firefight against our anti-aircraft battery, and at about midnight they stopped and disarmed some sailors and soldiers at Camaldoli.

Meanwhile from Salerno came news about the actions taken by German troops by surprise, located to the detriment of those who were engaged in opposing allied landings south of Salerno to overwhelm our garrisons and defenders to occupy the port of Salerno (made then by them to explode), to interrupt telegraph and telephone connections, to plunder.

These actions extended to an almost complete simultaneity throughout the jurisdiction of the Naples Department, which is not yet lost, from Salerno to Civitavecchia, without the Grande Units of the Army being able to intervene effectively, both for psychological and operational disorientation due to the overthrow of the alliance, as well as the confidence in a rapid advance of allied forces landed at Salerno: all this despite the fact that the High Commands were readily adapted to the new situation by imparting directives and orders for the most energetic resistance to the Germans.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the services of the Navy continued running with increasing difficulties and with continued decreasing efficiency.

At 10:25 of the 9<sup>th</sup>, the communication with Rome was also interrupted: but the Command in Chief through the radio could keep him enough to know what was happening in the sea and on the ground and receive the provisions issued by Supermarina both from Rome and from Brindisi. However, on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup>, the telephone cable was still in use with Ventotene, informing him of the presence in the Pontine Islands of American troops.

The 9<sup>th</sup> a serious disgrace was avoided by persuading the German Navy through Commander Palmgren not to blow up the ammunition depot that he had at the Razza pier in front of Town Hall Square, but to throw them into the sea.

The 10<sup>th</sup> had armed resistance episodes opposite the nucleus of guard sailors at various facilities. Among these episodes should be remembered what happened shortly after 17:00 under the headquarters of the Commander in Chief and that, at the same time, in the nearby area of the Naval Base. Both were caused by Germanic soldiers, who, passing a truck, threw grenades and fired

with machine guns without any other apparent purpose than that of intimidating or provoking. The two battles took about an hour, in which the soldiers and civilians intervened in aid of the sailors: the Germans fled to the magazine under the nearby royal palace until they were forced to surrender, leaving 20 prisoners in our hands. Were killed the chief quartermaster Royer of the Command in Chief's staff, two sailors from the Naval Base and two Germans. There were several wounded on both sides, including Frigate Captain [Commander] Lubrano, 2nd in command of the Naval Base.

On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> was announced the imminent arrival of the Goering Division from the south, and with its possession of the entire city and suburbs on the day of the 11<sup>th</sup>, it became practically impossible for the Command in Chief to function. The admiral, with his immediate associates, moved to the Nunziante palace in Vico Monteroduni offered by his Chief of staff to the Mario Coda Services - Nunziante, where he remained until the arrival of the Allies on 1 October.

In the early hours of the 11<sup>th</sup> he issued written orders for the reduced operation of some essential services: radio reception and decryption of messages; Custody of what remained at the headquarters of the Command in Chief; Administrative service; Health service; All the unnecessary military and civilian officers and military personnel were left free, with the order of reappearance on arrival of Anglo-American troops in Naples.

Adm. Casardi thus justifies his decisions: "The jurisdiction of this Department, in part by the Anglo - Americans and in part by the German occupation, destroyed the media, plundered the deposits, cut off communications, the situation had become such [On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>] to make the Command in Chief's job impossible."

In the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> was introduced to cap. vasc. [Capitan] Guido Mengoni (Commander of Navy Naples and Naval Base) cap. freg. [Commander] Palmgren. He said he had been sent by the German Supreme Armed Forces Command in the area to inform that two Germanic armored divisions were marching to Naples would cross the city overnight, heading south to attack the Anglo-American troops landed around Salerno: he asked - Given the overwhelming preponderance of German troops to the Italian ones in the city - they did not offer resistance, in order to avoid unnecessary destruction and blood shedding.

Commander Mengoni replied that the decision did not apply to the Navy Command but to the Territorial Command of the Army, which was immediately contacted in the person of Gen. Marino (Harbor Commander) adhered to the German request not to harass the transit of the two divisions.

During the German occupation of the Gulf of Naples and the city, which lasted 20 days (September 11-30), the tyranny of the Nazi troops, the harassment of all kinds, the destruction made, the establishment of compulsory labor with the roundups of men, They were such that, as it is now handed over to history, they provoked the fair revolt of the population, which in the memorable days of September 28, 29 and 30 did not say no to the Germans who withdrew before the advance of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army.

The Germans, both during the occupation and during the retreat, "with meticulous and ruthless care had destroyed everything by the fire and mine from Salerno to Cape Miseno, which could be of military importance even though minimal, Industrial or public utility, thus completing the devastating work carried out by Anglo - American bombers. The ferocity of the Germans has been such that former enemies, expected for three weeks, are greeted by the population as true liberators." So wrote Adm. Casardi.

On October 1, he returned with his Staff to the devastated Headquarters Command building, while in the following days officers, nurses and sailors came in. In those three weeks, however, they had not been abandoned to themselves: two thirds were fortunately natives of Campania, and so the admiral could not, without serious risks to his emissaries, let them deliver cash aid by taking advantage of the fact that almost all the existing cash funds could be saved. Other sailors, having families in other regions, had been helped and hosted by their comrades in Naples and the surrounding area.

Of all the locations of the Department of the Low Tyrrhenian Sea, besides Civitavecchia, Gaeta and Naples, of which we have talked about, Castellammare di Stabia was well proven and now deserves to be reminded of what has happened to it, not to mention Salerno that was overwhelmed immediately after the allied landing and then quickly released.

The announcement of the armistice provoked in Castellammare among the armed personnel, both the Navy and the Army, aimless

- but understandable - a manifestation of joy with fire of machine guns and rifles, immediately ceased by the energetic intervention of the officers. Subsequently, for a precautionary measure, Navy Castellammare reinforced the armed guard at the two entrances of Corderia and the Garrison Command strengthened that of Navalmeccanica Naval Shipyard.

On the site, explosive charges for the destruction of the yard and ships that could not be moved elsewhere in the case of enemy attacks were already appropriately distributed. With Navy Naples it was only possible to communicate with a corded radio recorder in Corderia, the wire links had all been interrupted by the latest air bombardments.

Commander of the Garrison was Colonel of the Army Olivieri and Navy commander of the cap. vasc. [Captain] Guglielmo Robba. The latter was ill and the Department's Commandment had been delegated to the most senior officer present, which was the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Domenico Baffigo appointed commander in 2nd of the Lt. Cruiser *Giulio Germanico* in preparation at the Navalmeccanica and not yet delivered to the Navy. The Navy Command Center had been deployed in the nearby town of Vico Equense.

In Castellammare there were the following ships (Chart 4):

Cov. *Vespa* and *Lucciola*: brand new and in condition to sail;

CL *G. Germanic*, Cov. *Grillo* - *Cicala* - *Calabrone*: at the beginning of preparation;

SS *Maddaloni* (formerly French): arrived a few days earlier with a materials cargo;

Mz 743, 745, 792: in repair on a slipway;

Vas 242, 243: in setup (the first on the slipway, the second one just launched).

There were also 4 corvette under construction on the slipways, a former French submarine in disarmament and a few other smaller ships.

By order of Navy Naples the *Vespa* and *Lucciola* had to go on the 9<sup>th</sup> to Miseno to embark ammunition at the powder magazine and then move to Portoferraio.

But at midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup>, A.S. 13, sailing from Capri to Naples, had been stopped by American motor torpedo boat and his commander (sten. vasc. [Ensign] Giuseppe Po) was imprisoned and transferred to one of the motor torpedo boat. A.S. 13 had been made to continue for Naples, after the destruction of the radio. The episode was 6 miles from Cape Posillipo.

As a result, Navy Naples, while confirming on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> the *Vespa's* departure, canceled the *Lucciola*, perhaps because this ship did not yet have weapons and various electrical equipment aboard and it would not have been prudent to take the sea.

The *Vespa* left Castellammare at 10:00 and after embarking on the ammunition at Miseno, he arrived at Pozzuoli at 19:30 following a new order from Navy Naples. This corvette on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>, at 19:00, informed Navy Naples that German troops had occupied Pozzuoli and issued orders. He was told to destroy secret documents, to react to any attempts by the Germans to seize the ship and to scuttle in the event of imminent risk of capture. But on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> the corvette was deceived and surprised by the Germans, without the crew having time to react, and much less time to sink the ship. On the night of the 19<sup>th</sup>, she was towed to the north by the Germans, and at the end of the war he was found sunk in the port of Genoa. After recovery, it was found that they had hit him with explosive charges placed in the engine compartments.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, after transfer to Castellammare without any incident, Navy Naples gave an order all ships in the port to be made unusable for 15 days. The order was executed promptly and cleverly by commanders assisted by Col. g.n. [Naval Engineers] Gregorio Marini, Director of Corderia and Chief of the Shipyard's Technical Supervision Bureau. The disassembled pieces to make the ships useless were carefully hidden, so that they could be escape the search of the Germans but put them back after the arrival of the Allies. In fact, the Germans found the impossibility of being able to move any ships within a short time, made them sink, while causing extensive destruction on those still on the slipways.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> there were the first rumors of the aggressive intentions of the Germans:

- In the morning some soldiers boarded the steamer *Maddaloni* to make it exploded when allied troops arrived. The steamer would have to take the materials stockpiled in the shipyard for ship preparation work, and transport them to the north: when the Germans took possession of it, the machinery had already been sabotaged.

- The afternoon there was a clash between a German unit who had tried to break into the yard and our guardhouse:



a carabinieri [a Police officer] was killed and a German soldier injured.

The 11<sup>th</sup> was the decisive day. From noon onwards, it was a sequel to fighting, in which both soldiers and sailors were distinguished by courage and firmness by inflicting considerable losses on the aggressors and forcing them to clear the *Maddaloni*. While the Germans were to keep up two incidents, of a completely different nature, they interfered with our reaction. The departure of the *Maddaloni* quay to prevent it from being damaged or plundered by the attackers. The grounding near Pozzanodi of a motorboat in service between Naples and Sorrento which was loaded with passengers and escorted by another requisitioned motor ship and armed by the Navy: had been taken under fire by German batteries, which struck it with great slaughter of passengers, succeeding run aground before sinking. The requisitioned motor ship, saved the survivors, took them to Castellammare while fighting was taking place, which became more lively for our desire to avenge those innocent victims.

At 19.30, two German officers, accompanied by an army officer, and two civilians, who waved a white flag, asked for parliamentary power to end the resistance, as had already been obtained by the Commander of the Garrison.

The cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Michelangelo Flaman (commander of the *Lucciola*, that the orders of commander Baffigo had so direct particulate reaction of the personnel of ships) directed them to Commander Baffigo, who - in analogy to what he had already ruled in Col. Olivieri - gave at 20:15 the order to cease the resistance. Prolonging it with sailors alone, now short on ammunition, against overwhelmingly well-armed forces surrounding the yard and the harbor, would have been a useless sacrifice of human lives.

The staff went out neatly to the yard's door and was released after they had deposited their weapons. Also, like that of Naples, it was assisted, as far as possible, by the Command which was at Vico Equense and with a thousand ploys he could carry out the relief activity.

Instead, Col. Olivieri with his aide Major Captain Ripamonti and Commander Baffigo and Ten. g.n. c. [Lieutenant of Naval Engineers (res.)] Ugo Molino of the Corderia were brought to Naples on German vehicles and shot after a few days; As responsible - according to the judgment of the Germans - of the resistance offered by the Garrison, by the personnel on land

and those on board of the Navy. The Germans thus intended to take revenge for the dead that the valiant behavior of our people had caused in their ranks.

## 21<sup>st</sup> THE EVENTS IN SARDINIA AND CORSICA.

### *a) General situation and overall events.*

The events in these two islands are linked to each other, because to Corsica, all the German troops deployed in the latter island moved to Corsica with the consent of the Military Command of Sardinia (gen. di c.a. [Lt. Gen.] Basso). We will make a brief overview of all the operations that led to the expulsion of the Germans from the Corsica at the beginning of October, and then we will focus on events of particular interest to the Navy.

Armed Forces Commanders in Sardinia and Corsica was General of the Army Corps Antonio Basso and Giovanni Magli respectively. At the head of the two Navy commands was Adm. div. [R. Adm.] Bruno Brivonesi based in La Maddalena and Adm. div. [R. Adm.] Gaetano Catalano Gonzaga di Cirella, located in a villa near Bastia.

In Sardinia there were about 128 thousand men, divided between: four mobile divisions (among them the "Nembo" paratroopers); Three Coast Divisions and two Coast Brigades; units, to the direct dependency of the Armed Forces Command.

In Corsica men at the orders of Gen. Magli (who lived in Corte) was about 80 thousand, divided between: the two Divisions "Friuli" and "Cremona"; two coastal divisions; units of Bersaglieri grenadier, alpine, artillery, engineers and other services. The "Friuli" was located in the north of the island; The "Cremona" in the south; at the center there was a swift regimental grouping of Bersaglieri.

The German troops in Sardinia, under the orders of Gen. Lungerhausen, made up about 15,000 men, including the 90<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and various units scattered in various locations for mostly technical-logistical services.

German troops in Corsica, at the orders of Gen. Von Senger, consisted of about 6,000 men, including the *Reichsführer* Armored Brigade, located in a central area, and auxiliary units.

These German forces were intended to work side by side with the Italians with a common defense plan in the case of Anglo - American landings before the armistice.

The contribution of the German troops was much greater than that which could be considered by numerical relativity with the Italian forces, as they were far superior to mobility and armament.

On the evening of September 8<sup>th</sup>, Gen. Lungerhausen asked that his troops were left free to move to Corsica, where they intended to go on continent: the request was accepted. Gen. Basso ordered the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brivonesi not to hinder in any way the ferry of the German Division and the smaller units through the Strait of Bonifacio.

The ferry started on the same day of the 9<sup>th</sup> for some minor element, but the real transfer to Corsica of the German forces was completed between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of September. Several landing craft and smaller German ships, which were already in La Maddalena, and many other boats that used to accelerate the ferry from the two main embarkation points of Palau and Santa Teresa di Gallura, were used. Unfortunately, in the German 90<sup>th</sup> was joined by one of the of the "Nembo" Division battalions, which had made common cause with the Germans.

With the transfer to Corsica of the German 90<sup>th</sup> Division and other German units Gen. Magli had to make the best of a bad lot, since in a short time he was confronted with a number of Germanic soldiers quadrupled than by their presence on the island.

On September 8, he issued the order to cease hostilities against allied troops and to react against any attack, from anywhere. He states in his Memoir: "Since Corsica was a foreign territory considered not as a conquest, but as an occupation for the security of military operations in the Mediterranean, and would automatically return to De Gaulle's government, was arranged for the release of political prisoners and of the interned for racial reasons, and all commands were also informed that public order would be kept in full agreement with the French authorities, while intervening, however, decisively and with no weaknesses whenever civilians had made use of weapons".

As for the Germans, Gen. Magli, awaiting orders, found that no action was taken, which could serve them as a pretext for aggressive acts.

But these in the night from 8 to 9 September treacherously attacked the port of Bastia and the ships that were there. The morning

of the 9<sup>th</sup>, for the prompt reaction of Italian soldiers and sailors, the situation was restored with 160 deaths and many wounded Germans, 5 dead and 51 injured Italians on the ground, 80 dead, wounded and missing on ships in the harbor, almost all belonging to the TB *Ardito*.

Failed assault, Gen. Von Senger, Naval Lieutenant Guntel and another German officer presented respectively to General Magli, Adm. Catalan and Gen. Stivala (Bastia's Defense Commander) to deplore the incident *that they had no knowledge* (!) and to profess their feelings of loyalty.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the bulk of the *Reichsführer* Brigade suddenly moved to the Bonifacio area to ensure the undisturbed flow of troops from Sardinia, while other units were located around Bastia.

Here, in the meanwhile, incidents provoked by the arrogance of the Nazi troops immediately began.

Gen. Magli, though he had no precise orders except for the general directive to react to attacks of any origin, came then in the determination to attack German troops, which, without provocation, had done hostile acts: he thought to use the collaboration of the Corsican patriots. On the 10<sup>th</sup> he took concrete agreements with their commander [Paulin] Colonna d'Istria, who was a gendarmerie officer, distributing to the patriots the weapons that had been parachuted to them by the Allies in the previous period and which, for the most part, had been tracked down, had remained in the Italian military warehouses.

During the hostilities, starting on the 12<sup>th</sup> (that is, the day after the arrival of higher orders - which we have repeatedly mentioned - to consider the Germans as enemies), the patriots made various acts of sabotage and provided useful information to the Italian Commanders .

The operations lasted until October 4, the day when the last Germanic troops were driven out of Corsica, embarking at Bastia and moving to the continent, like those that in the previous days had evacuated the island bit by bit - under the our pressure - they had been forced to embark.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> gen. Magli had begun to move the Italian troops, who were deployed on the basis of the pre-existing concept of opposing Anglo-American landings, so that they could act against the German forces. These movements should have been completed by the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>, leading to the establishment of three main masses: one to the south (Div. "Cremona"),

facing Bonifacio; One in the center (the combined Coastal Divisions) as a mass of maneuver; One in the north around Bastia (Div. "Friuli"). The Italian forces, so divided, should immediately begin attacks against those of the new adversary.

Although the German forces, coming from in Sardinia, had just started marching north with motorized columns along the eastern coast: the Bastia target, where they intended to form the base for embarkation for the transfer to the Italian peninsula.

After fierce fighting (the most important of which happened in Casamozza), in which our forces could not be a match for the *Panther* tanks with the modest antique 47 mm pieces they were equipped with, the Germans managed to occupy Bastia in the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup>, despite road blocks by our troops. In the south, however, their attempt to capture Portovecchio was struck down sharply.

Meanwhile, the 13<sup>th</sup> was landed in Ajaccio the troops of the first French units, followed by a battalion of parachutists the following day: altogether about 800 men. In short, three more battalions of colored troops and an American assault unit arrived. All at the command of Gen. Martin, while another general, Mollard, came with the designation of the military governor of the island; both were de Gaulists Generals.

A common action plan was established between Allied and Italian forces. Until the end of September, however, only the latter continued to fight intensely against the Germans, waiting for the allied ones to move to the positions foreseen for the conclusive operations.

These took place between the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the morning of October 4, when at 09:30 a Bersaglieri unit first entered Bastia, leaving the French troops satisfied to occupy the city entirely, as had already been agreed between the commands.

In all operations, Italian losses - including dead, wounded and missing - were 2954 men, against about 4,000 Germanic. Those losses must be added to those of the Franco - American units.

It is worth remembering that during the operational cycle, the Germans three times tried to influence the mind of Gen. Magli: September 12 with a letter from Marshal Kesselring, 17 and

*b) Matters concerning the Navy in Sardinia.*

In Sardinia the only area involved in operations was that of La Maddalena on the route from the Germanic 90<sup>th</sup> Division to Corsica.

Adm. Brivonesi had news of the armistice coming down at 20:15 on September 8<sup>th</sup> by seaplane, with whom had come from Rome after the admiral's meeting with the Minister de Courten.

Shortly thereafter, the German commander Uneus, who was under the command of general staff of Marisardegna [Sardinia naval command] for relations with the German Navy, and asked if he had any news on the terms of the armistice. The admiral answered the truth, that is, that he had none. Commander Uneus informed him that, given the uncertain situation, he would begin the night of the movements needed to clear the German units in La Maddalena.

There were considerable numbers of German troops deployed in numerous archipelago and coastal areas. We had two coastal battalions, scattered along the beaches, and what mass of maneuver should have arrived on 9 September another battalion. The batteries were almost all armed by the Maritime Militia and the Navy personnel had recently been set up - in order to cope with any situation - units whose weapons arrived on September 8<sup>th</sup>, urgently starting the distribution that was completed on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> (1).

The following ships were present at anchor and berths on the evening of 8 September:

- Italian: Cov. *Danaide* and *Minerva* - sub *Corridoni* - support ship *Pacinotti* – Hospital ship *Sorrento* - six landing craft - smaller subsidiary vessels of various types;
- German: four landing craft - one motor torpedo boat - two mine sweepers - two motorboats.

The order, from Gen. Basso not to interfere with the exodus of the Germans from Sardinia, he caused Adm. Brivonesi some embarrassment because he had received from Rome on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> a summary of the Armistice clauses, in which it was said that Italy should make "every effort to remove military means from the Germans": but, as a good soldier, he decided to obey the orders of Gen. Basso. Shortly

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(1) The weapons for these seamen were first dispatched three months earlier, but on July 6, 1943, the steamer *Tripoli*, who carried them, had been sunk during a crossing by an English submarine just south of Capraia.

before had been announced the arrival of the Battle Fleet at 14:00, which he should have told him to continue for Bona.

As to the German ships present, however, he had control over them and that the two corvettes anchored themselves in La Maddalena's roadstead, and were ready to intervene if they had attempted to embark or suspicious movements. For the same purpose, he provided batteries to *act as ordered*.

At 11:45 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brivonesi gathered at the Navy Circle, not far from the headquarters of the Command, all officers to orient them on the situation and duties that it imposed on the principle of obedience to the legitimate Government.

He had just returned to the office when at 12:25 the Command building was surrounded and occupied by German platoons while he was talking to Adm. Aristotle Bona (responsible for Naval base services) and for Capiservizio.[ Heads of Service]. Commander Uneus returned, announcing that at the same time other German units were occupying the Command's secure headquarters, the r.t. station of Chiesa island (between the islands of La Maddalena and Santo Stefano), the lighthouse of Guardia Vecchia, the D.I.C.A.T. and F.A.M. Commands, the Commissariat and the Circle. At the request of the admiral, Commander Uneus justified such attacks, either as a consequence of the "betrayal" of the Italian government for the damage of Germany, or as a necessity to guarantee the undisturbed exodus of the troops from Sardinia to Corsica.

However, the occupations had provoked the Italian reaction, with gunfire whose noise had been heard by the admiral and by Uneus, while discussing: it was then found that there were 2 dead and 9 injured among our men, and 4 dead and several injured among the Germans.

After Adm. Brivonesi assured him that would not hinder the transit of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division, despite the provoking of force by the men under Uneus's command, and after the latter's assurance of no further occupation, both made orders to stop the fire. Meanwhile, a senior officer of Gen. Basso, who was present, was able to tell him of the German action (1).

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(1) It was then possible to see that one of the motives of the German occupation was the distrust of Adm. Brivonesi, caused by the fact that Uncus believed that the Admiral had lied, when returning

Obtained a cessation of fire, Adm. Brivonesi told Uneus that he wanted to inform Supermarina. Uneus certainly adhered, and the Admiral, who was connected by teleprinting - from the secure headquarters - to Admiral Sansonetti, told him the general and local situation, and begged him to "immediately inform Bergamini": this important mention was not detected, with the wonder of the admiral, by Uneus who was present at the broadcast.

Adm. Sansonetti wrote in his report: "Then he immediately made radio telegraph to Rome to reverse the course and proceed without a doubt for Bona." Referring to the point of Brivonesi's communication, in which he told him of the order of Gen. Basso to leave undisturbed the German troops direct to Corsica, Adm. Sansonetti puts it this way: "... and also because I knew that among the terms of the armistice there was the evacuation of Corsica on our part, I thought it was more convenient to free Sardinia. On the other hand, I knew that favoring the exodus could be interpreted as an offense to the covenants of the armistice, and therefore to Adm. Brivonesi communicated in this tenor: "I have no right to take the required commitment [ie not to interfere in the transit of the Germans through the Straits of Bonifacio]. But you can settle in the local situation, I inform you that our warships will not be sent to the Strait of Bonifacio". This meant, in essence, that the Naval Command in Sardinia to let the Germans freely and to establish the commitment of reciprocity [that they would not commit acts of hostility]. That was exactly what happened. However, I did not revoke the order already given to *Vivaldi* and *Da Noli* to destroy all the German ships they had encountered while crossing the Estuary to reach the Fleet.(1)

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from Rome, he had told him he was in the dark about armistice negotiations. It was also verified that the operation had been prepared and studied for a long time by Colonel Ranke, a connoisseur of the Maddalena archipelago for having visited it before 8 September 1943 with the stated aim of coordinating Italian defense with the German defense of northern Sardinia. In fact, he depended on the units, unexpectedly landed on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> to reinforce those on the spot at Uneus' orders. Just against some of the boats that from Palau transported to La Maddalena German soldiers for the coup, fire had begun by the batteries of the F.A.M.

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(1) The consequent action, already described in paragraph 8, had little effect on La Maddalena since the Germans attributed to the Navy aggressive intentions contrary to the attitude of the Armed Forces Command in Sardinia.



Always in the protected headquarters, the admiral and commander Uneus came to an agreement, which the admiral commutated to Gen. Basso and to Supermarina: "I am committed to not doing hostile acts against German troops moving from Sardinia to Corsica on condition that the German Command maintain unchanged occupations already done and do not attack any barracks, ammunition depot, batteries, installations, etc. Reciprocally, the Italian troops will not attack German detachments and everything that has already been occupied. The German command allows the undisturbed release of seaplanes and submarines."

Out of the protected headquarters, the admiral noted that the Covs. *Danaide* and *Minerva* were no longer in the roadstead, at the points ordered by him. What had happened?

The two corvettes shortly after 09:00 had anchored in the points indicated. At 12:10 on the *Danaide* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Fabiani) capitano di fregata [Commander] Corvetti (already named in paragraph 8) with the "admiral's order shoot only when attacked and ready to prevent the landing craft from leaving the port of La Maddalena, if it is ordered by the Navy Command with a conventional telegram."

Shortly thereafter, the *Danaide* had been aware of that German-style landing craft movement from Palau carrying units of soldiers to surprise the headquarters of the Naval Command. Commander Corvetti rushed in a speedboat, hoping to arrive in time to warn the admiral of the approaching boats with likely hostile intentions. But the Germans had arrived first, and he had returned to the corvette after having been helpless at the rapid occupation of the Command. No fire action, which could justify the intervention of the two corvette with arms immediately pointed to the area of the action. Continuing the apparent calm on the ground, the capitano di fregata [Commander] Corvetti decided to depart with two ships and at 12:40 telegraphed to Supermarina, shortly after having set in motion: "German troops occupied La Maddalena Navy *stop* I'm not saying we do not hear shooting". At 13:03 he repeated: "German troops without fire action occupy La Maddalena Navy: "German Troops occupied Navy La Maddalena and probably took ciphers *stop* Some local batteries probably occupied *stop* I manage meet *Fortunale* group *stop* I ask orders"(1). He had orders to reach Portoferraio, joining the Torpedo Division of Adm. Nomis of Pollone.

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(1) The torp. boat *Fortunate* had left Pozzuoli for La Spezia, together with the

At 13:35 also the sub *Corridoni* left the mooring undisturbed, heading for Portoferraio (where he went to Palermo with the torpedo division).

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> our battery fired by mistake against a German boat heading from La Maddalena to Palau, sinking it. This was Commander Uneus himself, who, unharmed, was saved by swimming to shore. The accident - which was clarified - certainly did not contribute to diminishing the tensions. Neither the Germans, nor those of the Italians exasperated by the limitation of freedom inflicted on our admirals (Brivonesi and Bona). The Adm. Brivonesi then, to realize the situation and to try to calm the minds, he made an inspection tour accompanied by German officers. It was thus known that the Germans had failed to reach the fence of the naval base (east of La Maddalena and the Command) and that the Caprera was in the firm hand of the cap. freg. Ermanno Sollazzo, his deputy chief of staff, whom he had no news of having escaped from the Command the day before and went to Caprera to become a center of threat behind the Germans, with the numerous batteries that were on the island. And the Germans never attempted to attack her, however worried that Commander Sollazzo could take action contrary to the guidelines that the admiral would have been able to give him.

In the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Commander Uneus was replaced by Colonel Almers and sent to Palau to direct boat traffic with Corsica..

The newcomer made no pressure on the Adm. Brivonesi to get new benefits in peace and on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> told him that he had news of a likely attack of ours against his men; to which he was told that measures had been taken to avoid it. And in fact nothing happened during the night.

At 14:00 on the 11<sup>th</sup> arrived at Navy Command - announced the day before - Gen. Lungerhausen, accompanied by an official - interpreter of Gen. Basso. He asked the admiral, in addition to the confirmation of his peaceful intentions, how it would be settled if Anglo-American ships had been presented.

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*Calliope* and *Fabrizi*, at 19:30 of 8 September. After the armistice at 12:30 of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Supermarina ordered to divert for La Maddalena and a few hours later to Portoferraio, where he arrived with the two corvettes and the other two torpedo boats that followed him.

He replied that, according to the armistice, no Italian intervention would be conceivable. The German general replied that he was forced to demand the ceding of six anti-ship batteries in the Estuary and the removal of Italian personnel from all other batteries, to avoid surprises; He also asked to secure with German troops the safety of the boarding boats of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division. The admiral replied that he could not agree to the request without being authorized by Gen. Basso. At that the German threatened to use force with all means at its disposal, if Gen. Basso had not allowed; He then left La Maddalena. General Basso, informed by telex, answered at 06:00 on 12 September that he allowed the German occupation of two small stretches of the harbor to gather troops destined for Corsica and the position of German batteries for action against any Anglo - American attacks, but that did not allow the ceding of Italian batteries or the removal of our artillery; he added that he rejected German threats by reminding the "German general" of his personal commitment yesterday to never open fire on Italian elements unless after being subjected to our fire".

The answer of the Gen. Basso was communicated by the admiral to Colonel Almers at 15:00 on the 12<sup>th</sup>, when he decided to come to the admiral. However, he continued to insist on the demands of the general. At 16:00, as the discussion continued, the admiral came to the news that a German officer had appeared on the battery of Monte Altura, asking to occupy it. He then, in the presence of Almers, ordered the battery commander to refrain from using it against Germanic maritime traffic, but not to allow any occupation; Almers to have in turn accordingly, in order to prevent a forceful action against Monte Altura degenerate into a general combat.

The Almers immediately left the admiral's office and gave orders to the German military, who were always guarding the Command's building. Shortly after Adm. Brivonesi and Adm. Bona was invited to go to their homes, where Germans were stationed, while the other officers in the building were locked in place and watched; at the same time all the premises were invaded and all phones removed.

To the demand for explanations for his traitorously and unworthy behavior, Almers did not abandon his attitude. The

morning after the admiral addressed a vibrated letter of protest, asking him to bring it to General Lungershausen and Basso. He also warned against the very serious consequences of the kidnapping that he had made of the admirals and officers of the Command, both because he had been put in a position to no longer be able to control the situation and because the news of the kidnapping would certainly exacerbate the spirit of soldiers and sailors of the base.

At 09:30 on the 13<sup>th</sup>, while Adm. Brivonesi was writing his protest, heard intense cannon fire from every direction, followed shortly after by machine gun and rifle fire in every area of the city and naval base.

Colonel Almers immediately came to him, begging him to intervene to end the serious new incident. The Admiral pretended first to read his protest and then, giving up his insistence, he consented to go with him to the Guardia Vecchia lighthouse (which was in German hands) to have a panoramic view of what was happening.

At 10:15, the admiral, standing at the lighthouse with the colonel, proposed to stop the fighting on the basis of the restoration of the starting positions and the exchange of any prisoners: he was worried that even if we were triumphant at a moment, Retaliation would be made by the 90<sup>th</sup> Division that was meeting shortly to continue the ferry to Corsica. Almers was concerned about the outcome of the fighting and the interruption in traffic to Corsica.

Cessation of the battery fire was obtained quite early; but the clashes between the infantry units could not be calmed until 15:30.

Then the Admiral, together with Colonel Almers, at the Navy's barracks, where the spirits were still high, and then to the Naval Base, his car was surrounded by armed sailors who, took offense by the seizure of their admirals, They did not intended to stop the action against the Germans until they had obtained the liberation of their leaders.

In short, the action of persuasion towards the sailors lasted until the next day, when they persuaded themselves to return the numerous prisoners they had made, after Colonel Almers had accepted two conditions:

- give full freedom to the admirals and to all Command officers, restoring telegraphic and telephone lines;
- remove the German guard at Command buildings and replace it with a guardian of Italian sailors.

That's what happened.

In the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, a group of German soldiers had taken over our landing craft and brought him to Palau. Informed immediately of the fact, Point Tegel's battery had opened fire against the landing craft; from the Sardinian coast some German batteries had responded and briefly the fire had become general. Soldiers and sailors, who had already been warned to be prepared to act in the event of any incident, had left the housing they were in (barracks, basement facilities, commissariat, etc.) or had begun to advance, firmly resolved to release their admirers and drive the Germans out of La Maddalena.

Cap. vasc. [Captian] Carlo Avegno, commander of the Base, was placed at their head, who found glorious death (gold medal in memory) together with the infantryman Rinaldo Veronesi (bronze medalist in the memory) during the multiple clashes lasting for about 4 hours. The last unit of sailors only induced on the 14<sup>th</sup> to calm their exasperation were therefore those of the Base who wanted to avenge at any cost the death of their commander.

Naturally, the menacing attitude of these sailors held Col. Almers in suspicion until the prisoners were seen returning, especially since the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> they had taken off their on their own initiative- without being authorized by the admiral - the Ro. 43 seaplane of Naval Fleet's Aircraft Unit, which had been sent to La Maddalena on the 9<sup>th</sup> in anticipation of the ships anchoring in the archipelago's berths.

Calm down tempers, on the afternoon of the 14th could be holding a meeting to define those agreements designed to prevent the renewal of large-scale accidents like the day before. At the end of the meeting, Almers announced that he had been given another assignment and that he should leave La Maddalena immediately, giving the orders to a captain present at the meeting. Gen. Lungerhausen - he knew - had severely judged the colonel, who with his behavior had provoked the Italian reaction.

On the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> the funeral of the fallen Italians and Germans took place: respectively 24 and 8. The wounded on the day of the 13<sup>th</sup> were 46 Italians, 24 Germans (1).

Immediately after the funeral, the last German detachment left La Maddalena, having completed the embarkation of the Germanic troops at Palau, and in the evening the captain mentioned above also departed. Continued until the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> the marching of the Germans to the town of Santa Teresa di Gallura outside the zone of the Estuary.

Even so, the same evening, they left La Maddalena the last German boats, together with Commander Uneus, before leaving he had introduced himself to the admiral to say goodbye.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brivonesi went to Bortigali (headquarters of the Armed Forces Command of Sardinia) to report to Gen. Basso about the events in La Maddalena, on which the general had already expressed his satisfaction, repeated him a few days later to the staff during his visit to La Maddalena.

The Adm. Brivonesi summoned the 18<sup>th</sup> to Gen. Basso found the American Lieutenant Colonel Obolensky, who had dropped three days earlier by parachute in a point in southern Sardinia, to make first contact with Gen. Basso. As a result, on the 18<sup>th</sup> came Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, the cousin of the President, who – Adm. Brivonesi - decided to leave to Gen. Basso the command of Sardinia, reserving to the Allies only the use of ports and airports.

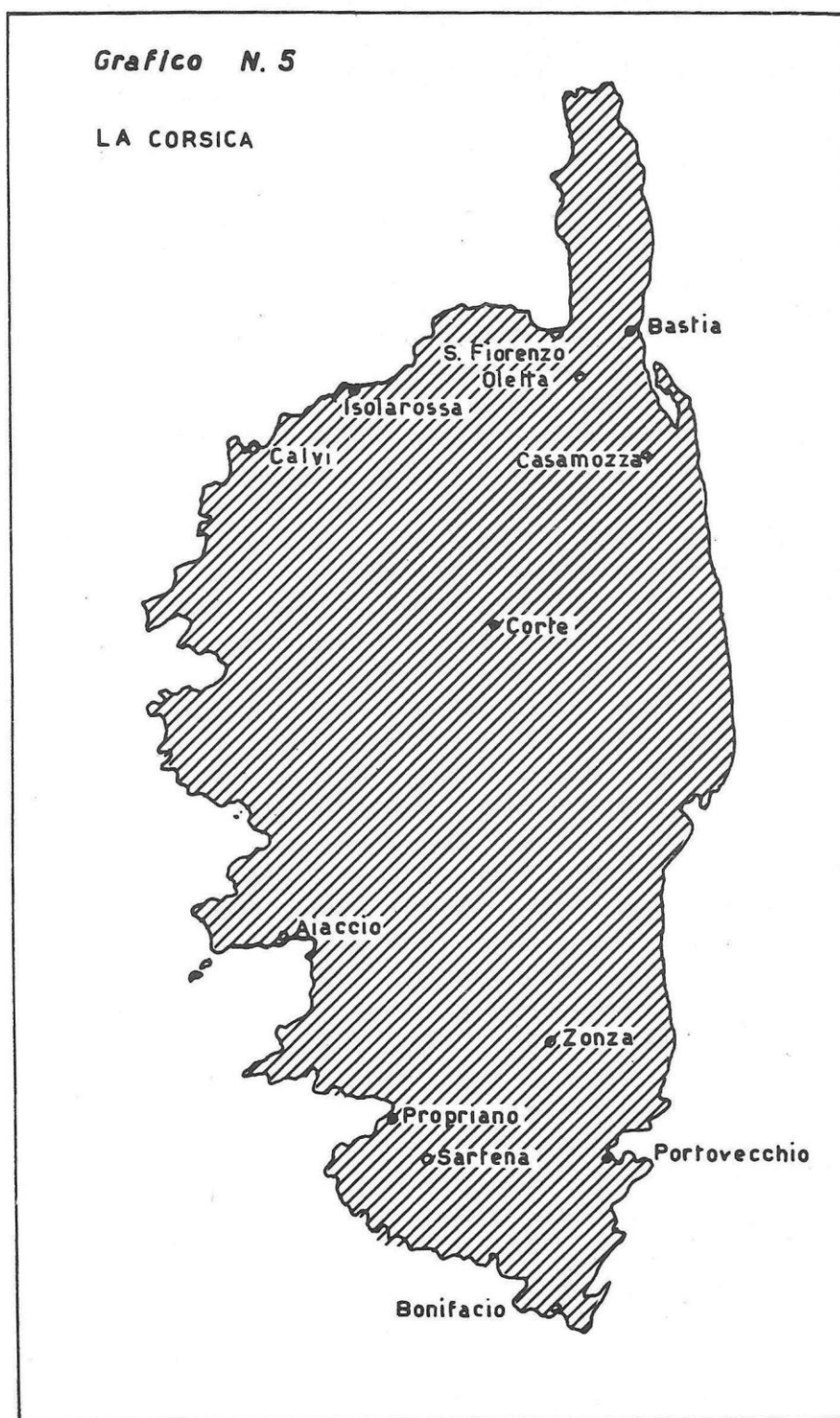
On 22 September, at La Maddalena arrived as a first group of British motor torpedo boats; a second group of American motor torpedo boats arrived in Cagliari on September 30th. So the naval cooperation with Allies had a start in Sardinia.

*c) Events in Corsica (Drawing 5).*

In Corsica, the Navy had, in addition to the Naval Command (amm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Gaetano Catalano Gonzaga di Cirella), usually resident in Bastia (with a secure headquarters in the nearby town of La Croix), the three Navy Commands of: Bastia (cap. vasc. [Capitan] Enzo Vannini), Ajaccio (cap. freg. [Commander] Manlio Minucci), Bonifacio - Portovecchio (cap. freg. [Commander] Marc'Aurelio Raggio). Overall there were about 2000 men, among them

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(1) The difference in losses was due to the fact that our attackers were necessarily very close, while the opponents defended themselves from sheltered positions. In addition, the Germans had superiority in automatic weapons.



with 103 officers, divided into three unequal groups. In addition to the normal tasks of the Navy, the Navy was entrusted with the organization of the coastal batteries, which for the job depended on the Army, the defense of ports.

On the evening of 8 September, the following ships were at the moorage:

- In Bastia: TB *Aliseo* and *Ardito* - Mas 543 - SS *Humanitas* and SS *Sassari* (having German weapons with German personnel for their defense) - 18 minor auxiliary vessels (auxiliary minesweepers, auxiliary ships, tugs). (Drawing 6).

- In Ajaccio: Subs H. 1, H. 2, H. 4 - 2 minesweepers - 1 landing craft,

- In Bonifacio: Sub H. 6 and *Rismondo* (ex Yugoslav) - Tkr. *Garigliano* - 6 small auxiliary ships.

- In Portovecchio: SS *Giglio* - 3 small auxiliary vessels.

It was also in the sea off of Bastia for anti-sub vigilance Cov. *Cormorano*, The other two corvettes assigned to the Naval Command of Corsica, they were the *Folaga* in La Spezia and the *Ape* in Portoferraio.

In Bastia there were also 2 German Csmgs [Sub hunters] and 7 Mz [Landing Craft], who arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

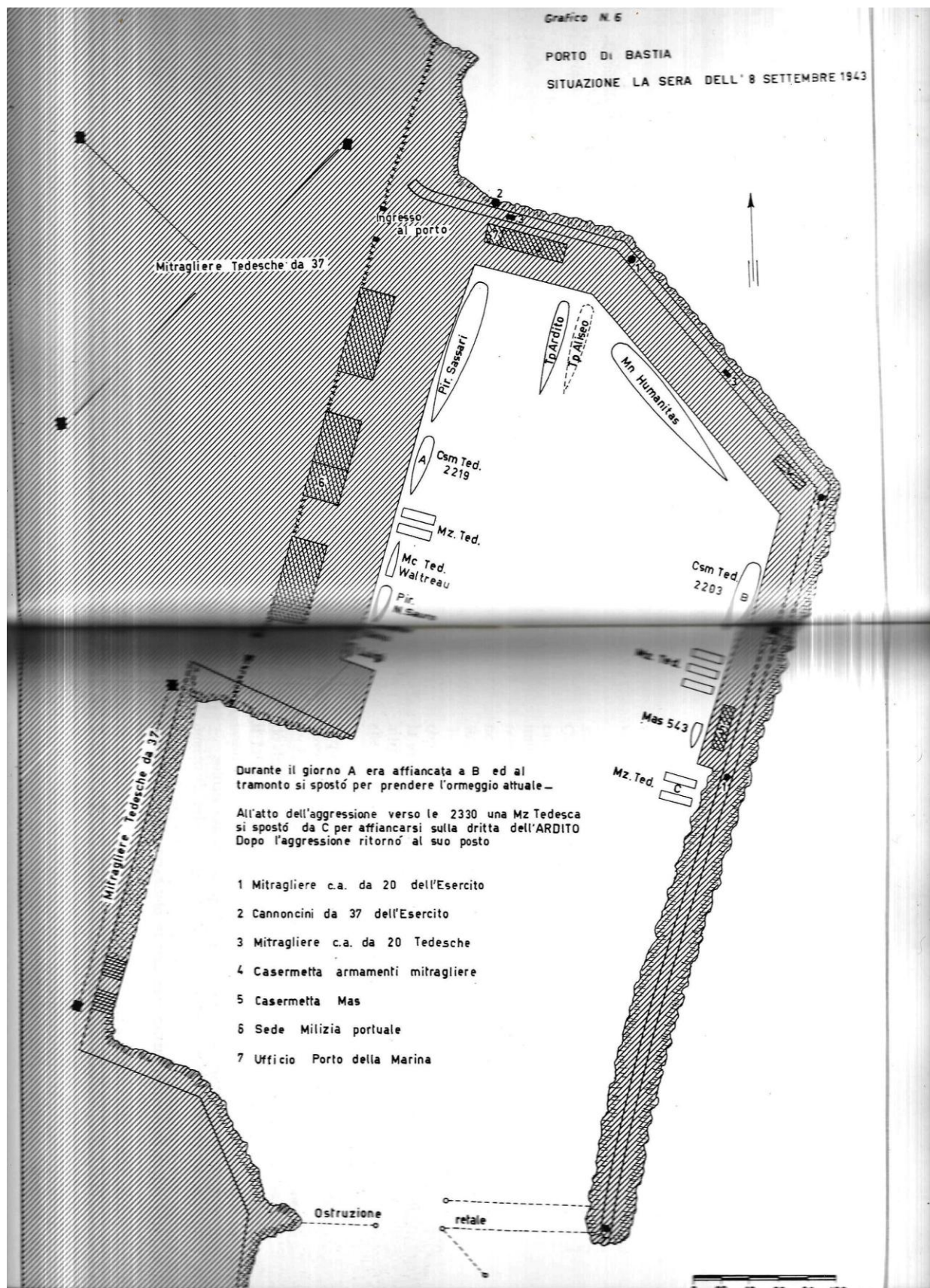
At the announcement of the Armistice, the Naval Command moved with the admiral to La Croix's protected headquarters, where the radio station was located; The Naval Command of Bastia moved to the city's "citadel", where the main telegraphic center of Corsica was located.

Orders were immediately issued to implement emergency and vigilance services.

Immediately after the first broadcast by Radio London of the news of the armistice Gen. Magli telegraphed to the commanders of Large Ships, including Adm. Catalan, in an effective way, recalling the duty of a dignified solicitude and of cutting off any act of detriment to our honor. Then, at 22:00, Adm. Catalan received from the general a new telegram that said: "... I call attention to the last two periods of the message Badoglio, that is to say, that every act of hostility against Anglo-American troops must cease immediately, while any attack must be reacted from whatever part it may be. Our troops in Corsica, oriented as they are towards attacks from the sea, will have to continue in their armed vigilance ready for action in the event of an external attack *stop* as regards A/A artillery in the case of strafing and bombing action".



## The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict



The Admiral immediately portrayed this dispatch to all Navy Commands, adding the phrase "intensify vigilance on ships in order to prevent sabotage, unannounced fire on

## The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

any attacker, and gather small ships at a mooring place to secure their defense".

At midnight she would have to leave Bastia, headed to Sardinia with a load of military supplies and ammunition (see paragraph 12-g), Motorship *Humanitas*, escorted by the two German Csmg [Sub Hunters] and the two TB *Ardito* and *Aliseo*, with which last had arrived from Genoa in the morning at 09:00.

Proclaimed the armistice, the admiral exempted the two German Csmg [Sub Hunters] from escorting, and the local German commander (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Guntel) thanked him for the decision.

At 23:40, the *Aliseo* (cap. freg. [Commander] Carlo Fecia di Cossato) came out of Bastia undisturbed. Just a few minutes later the *Ardito* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Silvio Cavo) at a clearly agreed signal (gun shot fired by one of the German landing craft) was taken under the crossfire of the German ships while she was about to raise the anchor and the commander had not left his lodging. The German armaments of the machine guns on Motorship *Humanitas* and *Sassari* also participated in the aggressive attack. On the other two ships, the Germans, as well as firing on the *Ardito*, they also swept the deck and the bridge of the motor ships themselves to prevent the reaction of the Italian crews. On the *Humanitas*, among others, was wounded by in the hand and one leg ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Primo Sarti, who was the military commander.

About one third of the crew was put out of action on the *Ardito*, and the torpedo boat had serious damage and a fire on the bow.

Probably some shots of each ship fell on board the other, since their common target was between them: the fact was that the *Humanitas* stern was wrapped in a fire, very dangerous for the ammunition she that had in some holds.

German soldiers then broke into the *Ardito* and removed valuable items and anything that was at hand. At the same time, another aggressor unit invaded the Mas 543, captured the commander by carrying him away on a landing craft and removed the magnets of the auxiliary motors.

As soon as the fire came to a halt, the Germans - with swift moves of patrols - occupied the entire harbor, capturing all the military and civilian personnel there.

Adm. Catalan immediately asked Gen. Magli for reinforcement of a rapid unit to counteract the aggression, being estimated by General Stivala (commander of the defense of the port) insufficient forces at his disposal. At 05:00 (the 9<sup>th</sup>) a Bersaglieri motorcyclists company of bikers and a company of light tanks arrived at Bastia.

Gen. Magli also authorized the on-site batteries to fire on the German ships attempting to leave Bastia; Adm. Catalan, on the other hand, ordered the *Aliseo*, the *Cormorano* and the *Ape* to be at 06:00 in a cruise in front of the harbor outside the reach of German coastal batteries in order to capture enemy ships outgoing (1).

In the invasion of the harbor was also imprisoned. cap. vasc. [Captain] Enzo Vannini (Commander of Navy Bastia), who was rushed boldly.

But ten. vasc [Lieutenant] Guntel, who was a very friend of him, promptly released him, and with him he went aboard the *Ardito* and *Humanitas*, assisting the wounded, extinguishing the fires, and preventing the scuttling of the torpedoed boat which appeared in serious danger.

Meanwhile, German and Italian patrols crossed the city quarters around the harbor, disarming and capturing the military opponents they encountered.

Towards 08:00 the harbor was again in our possession without a fight, because the Germans ceased all action to the sight of the Bersaglieri and the tanks, persuaded to give up also won by the work of persuasion made by ten. vasc [Lieutenant] Guntel.

It has already been mentioned in (a) that the situation returned normal with the apologies presented to our Authorities by the Germanic ones.

While on the ground the events described above were being made, the German ships (2 sub hunters and 7 landing craft) began the disaster management at the beginning of the dawn. By 06:30 they were crossing the defensive barriers, when the Italian batteries opened fire against them, sinking two landing craft at the mouth of the harbor.

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(1) The *Ape* would have to rush from the nearby Portoferraio. But the admiral wrote in his report that the *Ape* had to go back to Portoferraio for failure at the helm. However, this is not apparent from the *Ape*'s documentation: or rather, it turns out that the *Ape* did not move from Portoferraio. It must be deduced that the failure occurred before it started.

Subsequently, the *Aliseo* entered into action with a precise shot, from a very short distance, in an hour and a half, sank all seven survivors of Germanic ships, despite their reaction. The *Cormorano*, farther, gave her co-operation.

Then the torpedo boat and the corvette proceeded to recover the shipwreck. They then were ordered to go to La Maddalena, changed a few hours later to reach Portoferraio, following the events that occurred in that base. So the deaths of the *Ardito* and the *Humanitas* had been avenged.

While the corvette *Cormorano* was on track for La Maddalena met at 10:15 two German motor tankers directed to Bastia, loaded with gasoline. He asked orders from Adm. Catalan, who replied not to attack them. But at 16:00 there came a telegraph of Supermarina (obviously intercepting the communications between the Corvette and Maricorsica), directed to *Cormorano* and for knowledge to Maricorsica and Navy Portoferraio, where he was ordered to divert the two motor tankers to Portoferraio and to catch them. But they had already arrived at Bastia at 13:00.

Adm. Catalan replied to Supermarina at 18:27: "Command F.A. [Armed Forces] Corsica has consented to rearmament of Germanic troops and navy who have resumed their original location *stop* Situation now presented a little tense *stop* Already propose therefore Germanic tankers currently in port are captured on occasion they exit to sea *stop* Since corvette *Ape* following rudder failure is returned Portoferraio find I lacked naval means *stop* It is necessary to send to Bastia at least two torpedo boats or corvettes."

That was how Supermarina ordered the Cov. *Gabbiano* and *Pellicano* to go from Montecristo to Bastia, which gave them an opportunity to intervene on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> in the affair of the loss of the *Humanitas* and then to execute the orders of Maricorsica (see paragraph 12 - g). The *Humanitas* with prompt remedies had been put in navigable condition in about 60 hours from the time of the attack; the TB *Ardito* instead he could leave Bastia, with an efficient boiler room, on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:00, arriving at Portoferraio at 09:45 (see paragraph 12-a).

As for the two German motor tankers, they left Bastia at 09:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, having Lieutenant Guntel recognized it appropriate to make them leave for La Maddalena, to avoid new accidents. At 12:40, Mas 543 came out, who reached them one hour later and prompted them to follow her to Portoferraio. They, who were crewed with civilian personnel and had no radios, obeyed without

protest and on the same evening entered Portoferraio, while the Mas returned to Bastia.

The days of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> passed quietly in Bastia, in connection with the German's attitudes by Gen. Magli busy - as seen - avoid accidents while preparing the movements of troops to drive Germanic soldiers out of the Island. Not so in Bonifacio, where the 10<sup>th</sup> a German anti-sub ship had blocked the subs *H. 6* and *Rismondo* in port, preventing their departure, and where German A/A batteries fired on our aircraft in transit by knocking two down and where Commander Raggio stood in opposition with the Germans who claimed to occupy our batteries. In Ajaccio, however, the three other submarines (*H.1*, *H.2*, *H.4*) had taken to the sea, heading to Portoferraio.

Begin the 12<sup>th</sup> hostilities, which led on the 13<sup>th</sup> to the temporary occupation of Bastia by the Germans, *H. 6* and *Rismondo* were captured on the 14<sup>th</sup> with two armed fishing trawlers, and were sunk by the Germans on the 18<sup>th</sup> off Bonifacio. The tanker *Garigliano* was also captured on 13<sup>th</sup> and sent to Genoa with Germanic crew on September 16<sup>th</sup>, where she was found at the end of the war.

The 12<sup>th</sup>, Adm. Catalan, after a meeting with Gen. Cotronei (Commander of the "Friuli Division"), in which it emerged that, under the general operational plan, it was not possible to provide for the direct defense of the port of Bastia, he decided to transfer the Naval Command to the San Fiorenzo area and to distribute the subsidiary ships remaining in Bastia between the ports of San Fiorenzo, Isola Rossa and Calvi, and the Navy Command was established at La Croix (where it was one of the dominating Bastia batteries and where the Naval Command was until then).

All these movements were carried out by the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>. Only the tugboat *Vulcan* was scuttled, not being in a position to take to the sea, and the refrigerator ship *Florastella* was soon spotted, as it was hit by bombs during one of the Germanic air strikes of which in those days Bastia suffered.

On the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> there was a lively cannons between two Italian batteries and two Germans, who had the worst; A third battery was captured by the Bersaglieri, but our ammunition depot exploded. There was also an intense machine gun fire between our naval radio station of La Croix and the adjacent German, caused by the latter without apparent reason:

the German station soon surrendered and we captured the 25 men with their officer.

In the afternoon of the 13<sup>th</sup>, while the Germans were entering Bastia, the admiral decided to go to Calvi because a German column had been reported on the march from Oletta to San Fiorenzo. The Command moved with a truck convoy starting at 17:30, while the admiral with his staff departed by the sea with the Mas 543.

On the other hand, Commander Vannini, in order not to fall into the hands of the Germans, left La Croix with all the staff coming to Calvi the same night with another truck convoy. However, a part of the sailors - excessive in the availability of seats on trucks - had to retire on foot, dispersing in the woods to escape the German's raids.

However, between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> Maricorsica and Navy Bastia were settled in Ajaccio; here the first of the two commands started to work again. Even the men who had remained without transport arrived at the new headquarter after adventurously crossing the rugged mountains of Corsica.

From Ajaccio Adm. Catalan could restore the connection via wire or radio with all the headquarters, except with Bastia and with Bonifacio - Portovecchio,

The centering of so many Navy personnel in Ajaccio produced a crisis of food. He therefore decided to send some of the staff to Sardinia, as long as were ceded to the French the batteries and the accommodations of the Navy. Deliveries, which were performed gradually with solemn and dignified ceremonial.

Meanwhile, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, shortly after arrived in Ajaccio for Maricorsica, two Allied destroyers and an submarine landed, disembarking the first French units and Gen. Mollard (See paragraph *a*).

In order to begin the transfer to Sardinia of sailors, the 16<sup>th</sup> were centered in Ajaccio three tugboats and the Cov. *Ibis*, which had remained undisturbed in Porto Conte from 8 September until then (paragraph 2); however, the transfer could not begin immediately, because the Italian Command was waiting to know if it was compatible with the armistice clauses not yet known.

But the next day, following a meeting of Gen. Magli with Gen. Mollard, it was decided to give a course to the evacuation of Italian military from Ajaccio, except for a carabinieri company, which would remain for the service of order, and a unit of sailors for port services related to traffic with Sardinia. Thus the transfers began, starting with that of the sailors:



point of landing in Sardinia was Porto Torres, where the Adm. Catalan sent Commander Vannini to oversee the traffic.

On September 19, they arrived in Ajaccio, coming from Malta via Algiers, the two DDs *Legionario* (Captain Amleto Baldo) and *Oriani* (Commander Pietro Scammacca) carrying a unit of British radio-telegraphists, English General S. Peake designated top allied commander in Corsica, a unit of soldiers and various materials.

On September 20, it was known in Ajaccio that the Germans had gathered in a concentration camp the soldiers and seamen of the Portovecchio units and that at Bonifacio there were 700 sailors short of food.

On September 21, the *Ibis* and a landing craft brought from Puerto Torres to Ajaccio a supply of food for the Armed Forces and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> the ship *Tirso* arrived loaded with a company of tanks and armored cars, which Gen. Magli had asked Gen. Basso to continue operations against the Germans together with General Martin's departments.

On September 23, when news from Zonza that Portovecchio and Bonifacio had been cleared by the retreating Germans, Adm. Catalan left at 14:00 with the Mas 543 to go to Bonifacio and learn what had happened there, after 10 days of interruption of communications.

He was thus able to ascertain that following negotiations with the German command the Italian soldiers had obtained not to hand over the weapons, to keep them in the depots and to circulate unarmed in the city; the officers had kept their pistol.

Meanwhile, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, they came to: Ajaccio the French light cruiser *La Galissonière* and DD *Le Fantasque*, with men and materials. The latter had run aground on the beach of Aspretto, on the eastern side of Ajaccio Bay. It was freed after four days of attempts, with the participation of four Italian ships: two tugboats and two torpedo boats.

The next day the admiral went to the Portovecchio by land, not without difficulty, for the destruction of the bridges. He met in the street the detachment traveling to Ajaccio on trucks specially sent for transfer. At Portovecchio he found that the damages to the Navy's accommodations were mild, except the battery that had been destroyed.

On September 28, at Ajaccio arrived from Sardinia with Mas 506, the Allied Commission to agree on the evacuation of Italian troops from Corsica, after operations were completed against the Germans.

It was presided over by Gen. Roosevelt and attended by Gen. Peake and US Colonel Sikorsky.

The gradual transfer of Navy personnel to Sardinia continued with all available means.

On October 4, Corsica was liberated from the Germans, all soldiers were concentrated in select ports for clearing. These were Bonifacio for men with their weapons and personal belongings, and Portovecchio for artillery and tanks.

On October 10, the Admiral moved to Bonifacio to personally direct troop deployments, and the 12<sup>th</sup> ceased to operate the Naval Command in Corsica and dependant Navy commands.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> was also given to the French Navy the Naval Base of Bonifacio and on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January Gen. Magli left Corsica to take command of Sardinia replacing Gen. Basso.

The 31<sup>st</sup> was decided remain temporarily in Corsica under Gen. Lazzarini both an infantry regiment, in addition to the roadside repair engineers, all the batteries and the instructor of the French for the use of tanks: a total of about 15,000 men.

On the whole, from 9 October to 13 November they were transported from Corsica to Sardinia (in rounded figures):

62,000 men;

3,500 tons of materials;

1,180 vehicles.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> EVENTS IN THE BASES OF UPPER ADRIATIC.

### *a) Venice.*

As mentioned in paragraph 2, the commander in the chief of the upper Adriatic was made from the morning of 9 September Adm. div. [Rear Adm.] Emilio Brenta, who arrived three days earlier to take a newly created Naval Command, being the held by a prince (Ferdinand of Savoy - Genoa) who had received the order of the King to reach the South. For command of the base the commander in chief was assisted by contramm. [Rear Adm.] Franco Zannoni.

Venice had a heavily armed sea front, a A/A defense consisting of 28 cannon batteries and numerous machine guns, various Army units with some element of the Navy



for the garrison of military and industrial facilities (Marghera) and for coast vigilance five anti-parachutist laundering units; No air force existed for active anti-aircraft defense. However, since Venice had always been away from the operation areas, only two ocean front batteries (of up to nine) had been kept in armament, the ground front was virtually nonexistent, nor were the sea front batteries designed for use even on the ground front. In defense of the land side of the town of Laguna, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army (Gen. Gariboldi), with the troops of the Territorial Command of Treviso, had his Command residing in Padua, and whose attention had been recalled by the Department Command when - for the first Starting from June 10, 1940 - there was a threat to Venice in the aftermath of the influx of several Germanic divisions into Northern Italy after July 25, 1943.

There were 13 naval ships in Venice (the *Miraglia* and *Sella*, of which we have already spoken, the DD *Sebenico* in work, 2 motor torpedo boats, of which 1 are in work, 8 auxiliary ships, of which 5 are in work). There were also 30 merchant vessel (including the *Conte di Savoia* with a modest crew of custody, *Saturnia* and *Vulcania*) and 20 landing craft: of the 30 first listed vessel, 16 were in the yard.

No German command existed within the limits of the Venetian Base: there was only a captain with very few soldiers, with post office assignments, who moved at the proclamation of the armistice to the German Consulate.

At 07:00 in the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Sansonetti phoned the cap. vasc. [Captain] Gastone Minotti (chief of staff of the Commander in Chief) communicating the armistice clauses, with the recommendation to apply them scrupulously, giving him the executive of the rules contained in Memorandum no. 1 of the Supreme Command, warning that it may be no longer possible to communicate with Rome and tell him that the Duke of Genoa was authorized to cede his command to Adm. Brenta. The latter made immediate provision:

- to send military and merchant ships to the south who were in condition to take to the sea;
- to obtain from the Territorial Defense Command of Treviso reinforcements for the two battalions, which are numerically insufficient and poorly armed, located in the Venice sector;
- to enhance supervision of staff behavior, in order to avoid delays, and to strengthen the service of public order;

- to make unusable vessels that are not in a state for departure and land, military, technical and logistic facilities for at least three months.

As a result of these provisions, Venice left in good condition all the 14 efficient merchant ships and all 20 landing craft; of the military ships departed the 6 who were not in the yards (among them the *Sella* who went down into the circumstances described, and Ms 74, who departed at 22:00 of the 9<sup>th</sup> reached Brindisi on the 12<sup>th</sup> after short stops at Manfredonia, Barletta and Bari). Ships that could not depart fell into German hands without any time to destroy them; otherwise, given the limited depths of the lagoon, scuttling would have been of little effect.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the Duke of Genoa boarded the TB *Audace* (arrived in Trieste) to reach the King in the south. Adm. Brenta thought he would go south with the *Saturnia*. The two ships sailed at 22:00, but - as a result of a message that a German motor torpedo boat was coming - they were made to wait in doubt that the motor torpedo boat could attack them. Once the MTB arrived and tried to continue to Trieste, with the justification that in Venice there was no German naval Command from which it could take orders, the *Saturnia* left the lagoon at 12:30 (see paragraph 12-b). *Audace* instead had already departed at 06:00 in the morning with the Prince on board; But at 08:00 she returned to Venice with serious damage to boiler fans, and the prince continued to Brindisi at 13:30 by a Cant Z 506 seaplane followed by two Cant Z 501, just as the Germans occupied Mestre and Porto Marghera were At the gates of Venice (1).

The Duke of Genoa's departure made a bad impression, both to the military and to the population, who were not aware of the orders received by the prince, and contributed to increasing the general uncertainty. Adm. Zannoni, having a sense of determined state of mind, he carried out persuasion by making known that the Command was in full efficiency and that the Adm. Brenta had replaced the Duke of Genoa.

In the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> a commutation to the Command in Cape of Venice that both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army (with jurisdiction over northern territories to those of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Army had been

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(1) The TB. *Audace* formally a World War I DD, fell into German hands on 12 September. Returned by the Germans to service and renamed TA.20, it was sunk in combat by the British DDs *Avon Vale* and *Wheatland* at 22:30 of 1 November 1944, at the island of Pago, north of Zara.

overwhelmed by the Germans; indeed, the Command of Gen. Gariboldi had stopped working on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, canceling every possibility of resistance throughout Istria, Venice Giulia and Veneto, Venice base remained without any defense on the ground, as - moreover - the fall of Mestre and Port Marghera had demonstrated.

Meanwhile Adm. Brenta, after embarking on the Duke of Genova on the *Audace*, had tabled a daily order informing him that he was taking over the Command in Chief of the Department, appointing contramm. [Rear Adm.] Franco Zannoni Naval Commander and reconfirming in the post of chief of staff of the Commander in Chief cap. vasc. [Captain] Minotti, who had taken it in the middle of August.

It is therefore not unusual to point out that at the time of the armistice the Venice Command was in crisis, both for the sudden replacement of the commander in chief with an admiral just three days earlier (two passed in Rome), and for the presence of a staff head which was in place for less than a month, or for the establishment of a new organization that, with the fall of the events it did not have time to really enter into operation.

On the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brenta had asked the Command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army what behavior should have been reserved for the Germans and from them had the directive to resist, but without causing "excessive bloodshed" and without interfering in their freedom of movement.

Also on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brenta had called in from Pola the chief of staff of that Command (cap. vasc. [Captain] Ugo Salvadori) and cap. vasc. [Captain] Enrico Simola (commander, as will be remembered, of the Naval Academy headquartered in Brioni): the former had said he would communicate to the Adm. Strazzeri to adopt the same provisions for Venice, with the addition of reacting to German provocations, bearing in mind the caution recommended by the Command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army and preventing the exit of the Germanic ships from Pola; to cap. vasc. [Captain] Simola had ordered to go with complementary students on the *Vulcania*, coming soon there. In Ancona he had sent an official boat to communicate the appropriate orders to that Navy Command.

And here is how the events took place in the territory of the Base of Venezia.

*Day of the 9<sup>th</sup>.* - From Monfalcone to subs *Nautilo* and C.M. 1, both in advanced state of readiness and not in conditions to perform

long navigation: then they fell into German hands, not without the first - after making an unsuccessful attempt to continue for Taranto on the 11<sup>th</sup> - had time to sabotage, which is not certain for the second.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> arrived at Monfalcone also the Mas 518, which was sabotaged by orders of the Naval Command the 12<sup>th</sup>.

*Day of the 10<sup>th</sup>.* - At 09:30, the command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army ordered "to settle according to circumstances": given the changing situation in the places included within the vast jurisdiction of the Army, Gen. Garibaldi could not give any other directive.

In the morning, overwhelming German troops, before which a battalion was dispersed at Marghera, was unable to resist, they blocked the traffic at the bridge on the lagoon that represented the only connecting link of Venice with the mainland. But the Command in Chief obtained, through the German Consulate, that supplies of food to the city would continue to pass.

Many scattered (estimated at around 25,000), coming from the units of the Venice Giulia and the Trieste sector, tried to reach Venice by train, but only a part succeeded in the intent, because most of them - made arrangements with the Territorial Command of Treviso - were made to continue to Ancona and other places. They constituted elements of confusion, disruption and disorder, also because they sparked alarming voices and told them that those who laid down their arms were released by the Germans to reach the family: the Anti-aircraft Defense Command informed Adm. Zannoni that some defections had occurred among the personnel belonging to the maritime militia.

In San Donà di Piave (near the northern limit of Venice Base), the population, following the defeat of the military of the garrison, took possession of weapons, creating a dangerous situation. The Commander in Chief of the Department sent to the area three platoons of the *San Marco* regiment, which restored order and recovered the weapons.

Representatives of four political parties presented themselves to Adm. Brenta, proclaimed by the Prefect, offering civic co-operation for the defense of the city: the admiral, while appreciating the gesture, convinced them that - given the overwhelming prevalence of the Germans by number and armament and given the absence of fighter aircraft - A strong armed resistance would be resolved in the ruin of the city, so honored with glory and beauty.

In the day Germanic airplanes flew around the city, threatening serious reprisals in the case of sabotage.

At night Adm. Brenta and Adm. Zannoni, looking at the situation that was revealing, concluded that every efficient armed resistance seemed impossible and that the way of negotiations was to be considered the only appropriate one.

*Day of the 11<sup>th</sup>.* - On this day, the Venice base came to a standstill of events that could not dominate, for the collapse - as mentioned - of all the forces of the Army with its impotent commands, for lack of adequate means, to keep the situation in check. At 15:00 the critical situation of the Naval base appeared unequivocally hopeless, following the communication of the Territorial Command of Treviso about the cessation of the defense of the territory. Germanic aircraft launched other fly overs, repeating the threats of the day before.

Towards 17.00 appeared in the sky of Venice, directed towards Chioggia, Germanic bombers. The two steamships *Dubrovnick* and *Scarpanto*, coming from Flume with the personnel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, and with many military families belonging to the Army, were entering the port of Chioggia. As a result of the bombs one of the steamships turned upside down and a hundred people could not be saved; the other entered the Chioggia Canal, and all the crew-crew and passengers-landed on the ground and dispersed.

Then the bombers threw themselves against the *Conte di Savoia*, moored in the Malamocco Canal, and struck it with incendiary bombs: the fire could be tamed after many hours by the Naval Base Command's fire department. On that occasion, the anti-aircraft batteries did not react, on the initiative of the anti-aircraft defense commander, consuls of the Astorri militia (1).

It was clear, while the transatlantic liner bombing was under way, that this was an unjustified action, so much so that the attack of the aircraft ceased as soon as Adm. Zannoni - at the suggestion of a German officer who was in his office and the presence of the Adm. Brenta - telephoned to the German Command of Mestre.

About the infamous air strike against the *Conte di Savoia* Adm. Brenta thus reported: "The fate suffered by the great transatlantic

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(1) The Astorri consul, in the end of the war, was among the prosecuted in collaboration with the German invaders and sentenced to 12 years in prison. He was putting himself at their disposal, the without Command of the Venice Base knowing, as this was an honorable capitulation.

liner is not well understood what cause to report it. It is true that a German officer had come on board announcing the order to immediately transfer the transatlantic liner to the Gardens (order can be executed only after weeks of work and various predispositions [especially the checking of the sandbars and dredging to be executed where it would have to pass ]), but the unfulfilled execution of this order was not, in my opinion, justified by the severe reprisal consisting in the bombing of beautiful ship". Feeling that, as he had guessed, it was a misunderstanding, he did not solicit the counter-reaction; He also held him afraid that this reaction would provoke reprisals against the city and he thought it would be unforgivable for him to cause the deaths of hundreds of citizens for a misunderstanding about the transfer of the *Conte di Savoia*.

At 18:00, presented himself to the Commander in Chief, Major Feil of the Germanic "S.S.", with the apparent aim of confirming the freedom of traffic on the bridge for the supply of the city. Adm. Brenta thought he wanted to explore what probability on collaboration existed from the Navy.

Shortly thereafter, two steamers came from Flume with the Command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army and 150 carabinieri. At the same time two steamships attempted to leave Ancona, with a thousand overflow sailors from the barracks of the C.R.E.M. (Today C.E.M.) who was congested for over 2000 men over the accommodation. Of the two steamships, one departed while the other - after an engine failure - remained in the harbor and then fell into German hands.

At 19:00 two German Motor torpedo boats entered in Venice, one of which was the *Sella's* sinker.

At 20:00, a train arrived, with staff trained in railway services and other staff-yet, at the command of Major Schmid, who announced that he was designated Commander of the Base of Venice.

*Day of the 12<sup>th</sup>.* - At 06:30 the auxiliary vessel *Verbano*, which had left Pola from the previous evening with the families of officers and non-officers of that base and with the order to board in Venice food and water, of which in Pola, was urgently needed. The same evening, embarked food and water, the *Verbano* departed for Pola. This mission had been agreed between the Naval Command of Pola and the German authorities present there

At 09:00, Major Schmid presented himself to the Commander in Chief, confirming his appointment as Commander of the Maritime base and submitting the following requests:

- Prohibition of any movement of military and merchant ships;
- consignment to barracks for the military, which did not have to travel;
- requisition for the German command of a hotel next to the station (the hotel Principe is designated).

He ensured that communications on the bridge of the lagoon for the supply of the city would be guaranteed. He then asked Adm. Brenta who could rely on his subordinate units to keep public order: Adm. Brenta replied that carabinieri, public security and finance guards were trustworthy.

When Schmid asked if he and his officers were willing to cooperate with the Germans, the admiral replied: "I and my men are soldiers and as such, to any armed force and to any nationality we belong (Italian or German), we are held to obey the orders of our superiors without putting them into question and without making political discrimination; We would also have done acts of hostility against German forces if we were attacked by these".

Major Schmid went on to say that he would soon return with a delegation.

The first request was by no means important, because the ships that could leave had departed.

The delegation met at 11:30. In addition to Major Schmid, it comprised the lieutenant (naval) Schmid (namesake of the major) delegate of Kesselring, another German officer and an interpreter (1).

The delegation imposed on the Italian (consisting of the Admirals Brenta and Zannoni, by the Commander Minotti and by an interpreter officer) the following:

- no longer starting any war and merchant ships out of the jurisdiction of the Upper Adriatic;
- suspend the ongoing destruction (those prepared had already run);

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(1) The sten. vasc. (Ensign) Schmid was the commander of the MTB squadron, of which he was the one who - at his direct command - had sunk the *Sella*.

- Disarming all non-police officers (to avoid misunderstandings, Adm. Brenta immediately noticed that the weapons were very small, so that in the barracks of the CREM there were only 7 rifles having been transferred to the Army all portable weapons );

- to gather in the Fort Roma - with the intervention of the Adm. Zannoni - at 17:00 all the military of the Venice cities, with three days of food, backpack, blanket, with their the junior officers, to be transferred to a accommodations on the mainland;

- to gather at 10:00 the following day in Fort Roma the remaining staff of all armed forces;

- to gather two hours later at the Hotel Principe, Adm. Zannoni, Commander Minotti and all senior officers;

- the presentation of the Adm. Brenta with his deputy chief of staff (cap. freg. [Commander] Rocca Lucca) at 11:00 - that is, between the two meetings - to the Consulate of Germany with their letters and personal effects;

- in the case of default, reprisals against the population, bridge over the lagoon, reprisals against the hostages (1).

The Adm. Brenta had no other way out of accepting the demands, having no weapons to defend himself and not wanting to cause reprisals against thousands of innocents.

The German delegates stated that the commander of the base (Adm. Zannoni) was responsible for observing the conditions of surrender.

Subsequently, the head of the German delegation told Admiral Brenta that Marshal Kesselring accused him of having sent off for Malta from the Upper Adriatic military and merchant ships and having started the Naval Academy to the south. The admiral replied that he had obeyed the higher orders received.

Immediate provisions were issued.

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(1) The hostages consisted of a thousand soldiers who the Germans had loaded on the *Pontinia* moored in the lagoon, without food, so much so that the population had come to feed them. The *Pontinia* was that small ship (725 tons.) Behind which the German MTB had concealed itself, which had sunk the *Sella* with its torpedoes. After recovering the shipwrecks, he had been forced by the MTB to return to Venice, from which he had departed to go to Ancona turning back after the *Sella* episode.



The first gathering in Fort Roma took place between 18:00 and 20:00: they were evaluated as just over two thousand present, ie less than half of the force stayed in Venice after the defeat.

At the second meeting, on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, there were few soldiers (no more than 700 or 800): it was noticed the total absence of the members of the naval militia, who with their commander Astorri had declared themselves for the Germans or had left.

The military, with their officers, were started - in columns by the German forces present at the rally - to a barracks of Mestre, from where they left for deportation to Germany.

The low turnout of the military did not attract the attention of the Germans, especially because the Adm. Zannoni in the negotiations had, by the way, minimized the figures regarding the numerical strength of the forces. Adm. Brenta, while giving categorical writing orders for presentation at meetings, anticipated more than he could emanate by phone to take more time to get away by those who did not want to appear, and closed an eye on the fidelity of the execution of the orders themselves with the concept to reduce the number of those who after the rallies would inevitably be deported, as he had guessed from the outset.

All career military and volunteer military personnel and civil servants had been paid in advance 6 months of salary, for the military to pay the payroll, and to the workers of the arsenal and to the wage earners two quarters of wages.

Adm. Brenta was captured the same day on September 13 and two days later followed the same fate first Commander Minotti and then Adm. Zannoni: proud and happy to share their employees bad luck.

It should be pointed out that these three officers behaved with great dignity in the face of the Germans even in the acceptance phase of the yield; Even the heads of departmental and base departments carried out their duty with a sense of military honor and adequately with the serious contingencies through which the Venice Base passed through the four days following the proclamation of the armistice.

Nor should we forget that Adm. Brenta and Adm. Zannoni was treated during the long imprisonment, with particular hardness: the first was detained for nine months in a fortress (along with some generals) and the second was put under trial at Parma's special tribunal, but sued for

end of the trial (1). In this regard the Adm. Brenta could not understand why a charge was filed against the Adm. Zannoni, instead of himself in his capacity as Commander in Chief of what happened in Venice: indeed he had asked a question to the German Supreme Command, in which he stated that the trial should have been him and not Adm. Zannoni; When he was about to send it, he knew of the acquittal of the Adm. Zannoni.

Both of them in prison kept their stubbornness and denied the frequent invitations to co-operation: this probably depended on the measures taken against them.

*b) Ancona.*

The Chief of the Navy Command of Ancona was capitano di vascello recalled [Captain (res.)] Umberto Menegali: he was there since June 10, 1940. The importance of Ancona was linked to the presence of one of the Adriatic's Riuniti shipyards, which had built and built many ships for the Navy.

On the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>, had sailed from Venice tenente di vascello [Lieutenant] Mantero who Adm. Brenta sent to transmit to Commander Menegali his directives: the officer had received and had to transmit the directives in person in order to avoid written documents falling into German hands if he had been captured.

Such directives were the same as those given by the Commander in Chief of the Upper Adriatic to the other commanders who were employed by him, with some variants suggested by the diversity of local situations. For Ancona, the shipyard had to be made unusable for at least three months, at the arrival of the Germans their lines of communication had to be sabotaged.

In Ancona the defense depended entirely on the Army: it was armed with only one of two 152 mm batteries of three pieces, the other being sent to Tobruk a long time ago. The battery crew was from the Navy. At the anti-aircraft defense, consisting of only two 76 mm batteries, M.A.C.A. (Militia

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(1) The complaint occurred on January 29, 1944, together with Adm. Zannoni were denounced: Gen. Robotti Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, Gen. Vercellino Commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army, Gen. Caracciolo Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, Gen. Gariboldi Commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, Gen. Rosi Commander of the Army Group East, Gen. Vecchiarelli, Commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Army, the Admirals Campioni, Mascherpa, Pavesi, Leonardi, Matteucci. It was precisely in the trials that followed where Admirals Campioni and Mascherpa, were shamefully, condemned to death.

Anti-aircraft artillery). In addition, on the Mount Conero was installed the group of A/A machine guns intended for the light cruiser *Ottaviano Augusto*, who was on the slipway.

The total force of the Navy for the various tasks (batteries, obstructions, minesweeping, piloting, ships under construction, etc.) was over 800 people.

The depots of liquid and coal fuels were almost exhausted.

Very few were the Germans present in the city, in relation to the great infantry and artillery forces of our Army.

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, besides the royal steamer *Savoia* in ordinary and the *Ottaviano Augusto*, there were a few steamships in the harbor, the Hospital ship - *Principessa Giovanna* (arriving from Split at 07:30 of the 9<sup>th</sup>), two "pocket-sized" submarines of 36 tons (CB 11 and CB 12) and 12 auxiliary minesweepers. Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> (the day before the German occupation), 7 naval vessels (2 submarines, 3 Mas, 2 auxiliary vessels), 22 steamships, numerous motorboats and motorboats were transported to Ancona from several ports in the Upper Adriatic. In total between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> there were present or in transit 70 vessels: all were started in good time, except the *Savoia*, *Ottaviano Augusto*, SS. *Nennella* and some other ships.

The *Savoia* and *Ottaviano Augusto* remained at the mooring (the first sabotaged, the second intact because it was not usable before several months) and were sunk by Allied air strikes: the first on 19 July 1944 and the second on November 1, 1943.

Among the ships that transited from Ancona, the *Ametista* (coming from Fiume) and *Serpente* (coming from Pola) should be remembered in particular.

These two submarines had come to Ancona on the 11<sup>th</sup> and they left at 15:00 on the 12<sup>th</sup>, with the order of Navy Ancona to reach Taranto: in the order it was stated that in the armistice clauses excluding the ceding of ships and hauled down of the flag.

They departed the port towing the two "pockets" subs: the *Serpente* with C.B. 12 and *Ametista* with C.B. 11.

A short distance from the harbor, the *Serpente* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Raffaello Allegri) dropped the tow and shortly afterwards stopped. *Ametista* (sten. Vasc. [Ensign] Luigi Ginocchio) did likewise. The two pockets sub remained immovable.

Immediately after the *Serpente* scuttled, the staff transshipped on a trawler, called by Commander Allegri, landing at Civitanova. The *Ametista* imitated the *Serpente*, though the Commander of C.B. 12 (sten. Vasc. c. (recalled) [Ensign] Valles.) had attempted to persuade the sten. vVasc. [Ensign] Ginocchio not to follow the example of Commander Allegri, who had said to Ginocchio to do as he believed: another trawler embarked the crew and carried them to Numana. C.B. 11 and C.B. 12 continued navigating alone, reaching their destination.

At the end of the war it was found that Commander Allegri had premeditated the sinking of his ship, assuming that it was not in perfect efficiency, and that the young man sten. vasc. [Ensign] Ginocchio (who was then following the Commander's internship) was influenced by his example from the example of Allegri. Both then entered the service of the Salt Navy.

Both commanders; in the wake of a war, they were subjected to the judgment of a military tribunal for the crime of "loss of their ship". The proceedings, through various legal cases, ended up favorably for them, taking into account both their honorable war and disorientation in their minds of the confused and extremely contingent armistice, for which they had appreciated the situation despite the clear orders received by the Navy Command of Ancona.

Historically, however, it should be pointed out that the numerous ships that were transferred to the south of the Adriatic, these two sunk by decision of their commanders: in particular, referring to the submarines, the six in condition to take the sea carried out the order to moving to Taranto without hesitation (*Settimo* and *Otaria* from Fiume, *Pisani*, and *Mameli* from Pola, CB 11 and CB 12 from Ancona, although they saw the two largest ships sink under their eyes and were commanded by young reserve officers).

Returning to Ancona, here are the vicissitudes of the Command and Naval personnel.

By the way. ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Mantero returned to Venice in the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Commander Menegali proposed to the Command in Chief to arm the *Savoia* to get her to the south. Waiting for authorization, he sent to the ship crewmen taken from those designated to crew the *Ottaviano Augusto*, set the boilers up and prepare the ship for navigation. Delaying to get the authorization, he urged him with a telegram and it had

a negative response: so he put the ship back in disarmament, sabotaging the boilers.

The reason that led the Commander in chief of Venice to leave in Ancona the ship *Savoia* was not understood because it was in contrast to that transmitted to Ancona by ten. Vasc. [Lieutenant] Mantero to send all the mobile ships to the south, so that the commander Menegali started not only the ones already in the harbor on September 8, but also those that flowed from various locations in the Upper Adriatic, including Venice.

Perhaps in Venice it felt unmanageable to sent to sea a ship disarmed for several years, with a scratch crew.

Until the 10<sup>th</sup> the staff were kept disciplined; then began to shrink, facilitated by the influx of soldiers from the Dalmatian shore following the dissolution of those units and the rumors they had spread about the treatment by the Germans of the captured military (disarmament and internment in Germany). These soldiers fluttered in on sailboats and other small ships fleeing from Dalmatia, that were made to continue for the south with the soldiers who had no interest in disembarking in Ancona.

On the other hand, the garrison of Ancona was not in a position to make resistance of Germans who were approaching the city, and then Commander Menegali made the license [leave] roster indefinite for everyone and carried out the distribution of advances on salaries and on pay.

On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> the hospital ship *Principessa Giovanna* left Ancona, who arrived in Taranto on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>.

So when the Germans occupied the city and port on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>, all the soldiers had practically departed, the facilities and facilities were demobilized and sabotaged.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Commander Menegali was called to the headquarters of the Harbor Master by the German navy commander, who immediately challenged the responsibility he had incurred for starting all the ships sailing in the south. He was then transferred to the barracks Cialdini, where the officers of the garrison were assembled by the Germans. Through subterfuges, he was able to be released and moved to Rome where, given his age (61), remained undisturbed in anticipation of liberation.

*c) Trieste and Monfalcone.*

The Command of Navy Trieste was headed by the capitano di vascello recalled [Captain (res.)] Lorenzo Stallo.

The city had a maritime military importance, so indirectly, to be the headquarters of Lloyd Triestino\*, being a port of great traffic in normal times and to be the site of renowned shipyards in which September 1, 1943 was under construction or in preparation 2 destroyers and 6 corvette, in transformation into anti-aircraft ships, the two cruisers *Etna* and *Vesuvius*, advanced in preparation the battleship *Impero* and in major repairs the battleship *Cavour*.

The Naval Command Depot was responsible for the two Shipyard Technical Offices, Naval and Naval Navy Offices, the Military Captain's Department of Assignments, and the Group of Local Service Boats for minesweeping and Surveillance Services.

There was in Trieste strong German units (usually in transit to Albania and Greece), located in the harbor area despite the repeated charges by Commander Stallo to the Army Authorities.

Shortly after midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> it was given the order of preparation for the departure of military and merchant vessels in sailing conditions, while the school ships *Colombo* and *Vespucci* and the motor ships *Saturnia* and *Vulcania* had already been sent to Pola and Venice respectively, As has been seen (see paragraph 12 – b and 12 - c).

Night movements of German troops from Opicina to Trieste had been announced to the Navy Command by the Command of the XXIII Army Corps for the night, directing - as usual - towards port provisions. But after midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> they took on an intense and worrying aspect, so that the Army Corps Command decided to oppose them and asked for the eventual intervention of the artillery of naval ships against the Opicina – Trieste roadway.

As a result, the Navy Command ordered the *Audace* to leave the harbor and the TB *Insidioso* (arriving from Pola) to wait in roadstead. At 06:20 the Army Corps confirmed the immediate need for the intervention, but before Commander Stallo could deliver the order to the torpedoes, the Germans opened fire against them, who moved away, keeping themselves ready to escort departing steamers.

But at 06:30, with a lightning strike, the German troops in the harbor took possession of a 76-year-old battery and machine gun set on the wharfs to defend obstructions and the water in front of them and occupied the steamships at berth. In just over an hour the aggression was completed.

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\*Italy's largest shipping company

However local seagoing vessels managed to leave, while the Cov. *Berenice* was sunk (see paragraph 12-g).

Ultimately, on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> the 26 merchant vessels present were captured: on 18 of them were carried out sabotage, on the other 8 - captured, first - there was no time to do anything. Among the merchants was the *Rex*, famous for having won the Blue Ribbon of the Atlantic in one of the crossings.

The TB *Audace* and *Insidioso* went away: the first one for Venice, and we told the story; The second one for Pola, where – she remained immobilized for surrendering oil to *Vulcania* and sabotage - fell into the hands of the Germans who used it under the name of T.A. 21 until it was destroyed in the summer of 1944 during an air bombardment.

Meanwhile, the Germans extended their control to the whole city. The Naval Command, to avoid being isolated, by 09:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> moved to the *Cavour* and gathered all the personnel available. On the *Cavour* reigned in order and discipline, so that all the measures to leave the crew free and all the personnel flow were able to take place regularly; they also proceeded to sabotage the ships that could have been prepared in less than three months.

Returning at 17:30 to the normal headquarters of the Navy Command, Commander Stallo learned from the Command of the Army Corps who, for agreements with the Germans, had to withdraw by 18:00 the staff along the coast from Muggia to Miramare (ie towards Monfalcone) Because the coast would be occupied by German troops.

The following day, September 10, were surrounded by German troops with armed cars the Army Corps Command, Territorial Defense of Trieste and the Navy. Commander Stallo, however, returned to the *Cavour* and could, on a lucky day in the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, call Venice and make the Commander in chief aware of the situation, obtaining in his reply the permission to leave Trieste (as in the evening before the Territorial command had advised him shortly before dissolving). He, however, remained for some time in the area, in civilian clothes, and in carrying out assistance to quantified soldiers, clerks and workers - they needed it, and to settle administrative issues with the shipyards.

Monfalcone did not have a real Navy Command but a detached Section of the Trieste Naval Office: however,

it had the functions of Naval Command as the senior officer of the submarine group in preparation.

The major yard was September 8<sup>th</sup>, packed with ships under construction, and there were three fixed anti-aircraft batteries crewed by the Navy and four other roadways for its defense.

Among the ships under construction, repair and repair were: 16 submarined, 4 corvette, 2 MTB, 4 Mas, 7 merchant ships.

On the post was on the morning of 9 September, as the senior officer, Major Gen. Oreste Bambini, after the submarine *Nautilo* had left for Venice with C.M. 1 commanded by capitano di corv. [Lt. Commander] Campanella.

Maj. Bambini [naval eng.], in contact with the Territorial Command, allowed the two Mas to be able to move and sabotage all the ships that could be made useable in less than three months and the batteries. His work took place within 48 hours before the Germans occupied Monfalcone and the yard.

*d) Pola (1).*

Maritime Military Commander and the Pola Base was admiral div. [R. Adm.] Gustavo Strazzeri, who was in office for just under three months. He was responsible for the Naval Commands of Monfalcone, Trieste, Cherso - Lussino and Fiume. The importance of Pola was derived

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(1) In order to be able to adequately interpret the events that took place in the territories facing the eastern side of the Adriatic and Ionian, from Istria to the Peloponnesus, it is advisable to return the order issued by the Supreme Command at 02:15 on 9 September. The order was directed to the Armed Forces Command (Superservice, Supermarine, Superaereo), the Eastern Armed Forces Command (having jurisdiction over the occupied Balkans, on Istria and Dalmatia), the Armed Forces Command (Greece and Crete), To the Armed Forces Command of the Aegean. In the text we will omit the part concerning the Aegean Command, for which reference is made in Volume XVI.

"The Army Group East Command concentrates its forces by gradually reducing occupations as feasible and affordable so as to ensure that the main ports and especially Cattaro and Durazzo *semi-stop* give advance notice of movements to the German Commands *stop* For Greece and Crete already issued direct orders *stop* Air Force will have to Reach the fields of the motherland immediately or those of the Aegean *stop* Materials And: ground facilities in occupation areas will have to be destroyed and Personnel will follow the fate of that of the Army *stop* Warships and steamer craft located in various ports in Greece and Crete will have to come home right away ships that were going to fall into German hands would have to scuttle



from the fact that it was home to numerous schools: cannoniers, telemeters, motorists, personnel of the Submarine Training Schools and Mas, complementary officers section of the Naval Academy. Two airports were included in the territory of the base and at Port Rose there was the school for aerial observers.

It is important to remember that railway communications had been interrupted in Istria for a long time and that Pola was deficient in water, so it had to be supplied with tanker ships; by sea it also had to be partially catered for.

The fortress [base] had a 32-kilometer-long land front, which included the southern tip of Istria up to Cape Promontore, and was located just 5 kilometers from Pola, at the nearest point almost exactly north of the city. For the defense of the ground, the Navy Command Depended on that of the XXIII Army Corps belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army (Gen. Robotti). As in all the fortress [bases] of the Navy, the ground front was weakly held: there were only seven machine gun stations that were guarding the streets of access to the city; Vigilance patrols between the streets entrusted to reserve men; Of all the ships and contra-aircraft vessels (10 naval ships, 4 A/A, 6 A/A and A/S) two small caliber guns could fire to the land front.

Ultimately, the security of the base from offenses coming from outside was linked to the operational efficiency of the Army troops. The interior was essentially dependent on the ability to counter hostile attempts by the Germans group concentrated in Scoglio Olivi, an island in front of the seafront promenade of the city and connected by a land bridge with a repair site. There were three submarines and some motor torpedo boats with 350 men. These Germanic ships were undergoing work and only one submarine was in a position to move.

From April 25, 1943, special measures of public order were in force in Pola, suggested by the spread of various tendencies throughout Istria by partisans; On July 26 the Adm. Strazzeri, by order of the Command of the XXIII Corps, had assumed part of the civil powers.

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*stop* Ships in Aegean ports will remain in the port *stop* Ships in navigation will direct to Italian ports or the Aegean *stop* All troops of any armed forces will have to react immediately and energetically and without special orders to any Germanic armed violence and by the population so as to avoid to be disarmed and overwhelmed *stop* should not be taken initiative of hostile acts against Germans *stop* General Ambrosio”.

When the armistice was announced on September 8, public order services were strengthened in the Scoglio Olivi area. The Germans, well armed and equipped with heavy machine guns, had performed considerable anti-aircraft defense preparations at Scoglio Olivi, but the large anti-aircraft guns they had arranged had been set up so that they could shoot everything around the Scoglio: hence the danger in the case of crisis in relations between Italy and Germany.. In order to cope with this danger, it was expected to sweep the domicile of the Germans, the deployment of a machine gunner's platoon from the Gunnery School in a building in front of the Scoglio bridge, and the possible use of ship's artillery moored in a suitable position.

During the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> and day of the 9<sup>th</sup>, measures similar to those described above were arranged, speaking of the events in the other bases. Having immediately felt that the Germans had put themselves in a state of resistance, the machine-gun platoon was sent in front of the Scoglio Olivi, the men were assembled on the access road to Pola and the naval ships were ready to move, despite the prohibition of the Germans, who did not dare however hinder their movements with the only efficient submarine following the energetic attitude assumed by the Naval Command.

From the command of the XXIII Corps Adm. Strazzeri never received orders, but only requests for information on the situation in Pola.

At 15:30, the German Lieutenant Braun presented the admiral with four requests from his Command:

- Freedom of movement of the Germans to access their warehouses and depots, located outside the Scoglio Olivi;
- joint surveillance of harbor obstructions;
- freedom of departure for German submarines and motor torpedo boats when their repair is finished;
- abstention from any anti-german propaganda.

The admiral accepted the first request, rejected the second and the third, accepted the fourth by not taking responsibility for the citizen and worker environment.

Meanwhile, all movable ships were leaving: the departure of the most important ship, *Giulio Cesare*, annoyed the Germans.

There has already been an opportunity to talk about the departures and events of this battleship, the ships *Colombo*, *Vespucchi* and *Palinuro*,

with the TB *Sagittario* and Cov. *Uranio* sailed with the *Giulio Cesare*, Cov *Baionetta*, TB *Insidioso*, Subs *Serpente*, *Pisani* and *Mameli*, GB *Aurora*, Tanker *Verbano*.

In addition to these ship, all the departures were to Pola, the GB *Cattaro* (ex Yugoslavian *Dalmacija*) under repair, some "C.B." pocket-sized submarines, a fleet of auxiliary minesweepers (requisitioned fishing trawlers) and three sailboats, three Mas, some tugs.

The *Cattaro*, as soon as *Caesar* departed, was moored in her berth to allow him to fire - if necessary - on Scoglio Olivi.

The other units departed all except for the "C.B." submarines and a Mas that were not ready, and two auxiliary minesweepers.

He took advantage of the departures to save personnel from the Submarine Schools and Naval Drivers, embarked largely as passengers on the steamer *Eridania*.

Of this steamboat deserve to be remembered the events. From Pola at 24:00 on September 9 for Sebenico, with about 1200 men aboard, many officers and many aspirants of the naval engineers, arrived at 21:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The Navy Commander informed that Germanic forces were not far away, marching to the city, and then the *Eridania* left at 06:00 in the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> after obtaining a modest supply of flour. He headed north into the Dalmatian channels, proposing to route to Ancona not having - as the commander said - enough fuel to reach Bari. At noon three Stukas forced him to divert to Zara, where he arrived at 15:00, finding it already occupied by the Germans. He fled to Flume on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, following the order of the Germanic authorities, after embarking on 200 civilian refugees of both sexes. She came to Flume the same evening at 17:30, finding the city not yet in German hands. On the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Germans who entered the city - after having twice bombed the port area on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, without hitting the steamer - took possession of it, all the sailors were detained and the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> with an armed escort on board they made him leave for Pola. From here, about 500 soldiers sailed, the *Eridania* was taken to Venice and arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon at 15:00. All the personnel on board (about 2000 people) was immediately taken off for concentration camps in Germany.

The steamer sank on October 7, 1943, raided by the Polish submarine *Sokol* while sailing in the service of the Germans between Veruda and Pola.

Of the aircraft in the airports, only five were in a hurry to leave, eight more departed on the 11<sup>th</sup>; the others were similarly made unusable, just like the few ships left on site, while the aviation crew could partially embark on departing ships.

Meanwhile, the situation in Pola was becoming more and more worrying for the collapse of the units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, resounding manifest with the influx of stragglers, for attempts to loot military warehouses, for defections of personnel contained - however - by the intervention of the officers. Adm. Strazzeri, in an inspection visit on the 10<sup>th</sup>, realized that the units put in defense of the streets along the perimeter of the base had little chance of resisting German troops, so he made arrangements for them to be stopped by inviting them to send parliamentarians to the naval commander: this in order to gain time and avoid bloodshed; In any case leave the Germans the responsibility to fire first and, in the face of superior forces, to retreat to Pola. To make the situation more delicate, the partisans of Slavic ancestry contributed to make the situation more delicate, under the pretext of seeking Italian support against the Germans, controlling the whole of Istria and taking over military works and warehouses, so orders were given to oppose even the aggression of the partisans.

On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> at 22:00, was a decisive event. Lieutenant (naval) Braun presented himself to the admiral bearing of a communication, written in German, which began as follows: "Following the order from the Commander in Chief of the German Navy, Grande Admiral Donitz, the military commander in Pola to asked the Italian Naval Commander of Pola to fulfill the following clauses."

The solemnity (if so allowed) of the debut gave the communication ultimatum character. Eight clauses were listed, four of which coincided with those presented the day before by Lieutenant (naval) Braun on the initiative of the local German Command.

The others said:

- no Italian ship will leave the port under penalty of destruction; The two submarines with 4 crew members (ie pocket-sized ones) who put to sea should be called back again;

- no fire shall be opened against the German base or against any person belonging to it;

- scuttling of ships would be considered as a gesture of hostile attitude;
- the cruiser *Cattaro* will have to resume her previous mooring.

The communication concluded: "The Commander in Chief of the German Navy makes it clear that the Admiral of the Naval Command and his general staff personally respond to their lives with any offense brought to any person belonging to the German naval base. The means to translate this threat are ready. The answer to these requests depends on the attitude of the German troops that are on the march".

The admiral allowed to discuss this "ultimatum" and in the meantime issued orders to make unusable the batteries, orders that were almost completely executed.

On the following morning he summoned the chief of staff (Captain Ugo Salvadori) and the heads of service, and - comforted by their opinions - accepted the conditions of the ultimatum with some exceptions:

- Freedom of traffic for the tanker *Verbano* and for motorboats intended for the transport of supplies;
- confirmation that he could answer only anti-German propaganda among military personnel;
- transfer of the *Cattaro* in the Val di Figo (that is, in the area from which the Germans could not make use of them) instead of the previous mooring;
- no response to threats addressed to his person and his collaborators for cases of non-compliance with the accepted conditions.

He did not object to the prohibition of scuttling because it was not in contradiction with the order of making unusable the ships - which, as has been seen, very few - for at least three months.

Acceptance was justified by him with considerations that we excerpt from his report:

"The news on the situation of all the interesting front of Istria were now accurate and confirmed. No longer existed; the troops in the confusion; The High Commands disappeared; Trieste and Fiume occupied; Venice blocked (1).

"I had clear the feeling of my isolation, the collapse of

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(1) Fiume, as we shall see, was not yet occupied, but one of the generals arrived the day before had given the events; Venice was evaluated to be blocked by Adm. Strazzeri based on communication difficulties.

any protection force behind my back and the impossible defenses in which I discover.

"The situation of the base was then the following: no ship of any military value remained in Pola; The *Cattaro*'s engine was made unusable then she was towed into the Val di Figo and the gun breached were thrown into the sea. The *Insidious* was still out of the harbor; The *Verbano* could serve to take water and food to Venice. Merchant ships did not exist in port, either ready or in work. There was a development plan for making unusable various archives, materials and tools. The situation in the city was difficult as far as water and food were concerned. The possibilities of resistance became more and more precarious".

On the other hand, the agreement - as the Commander Salvadori wrote - avoided possible German reprisals and allowed the action of the Italian Command to continue to run with relative freedoms, especially since the clauses were only naval and did not concern the land front of the base.

In fact, on the same day of the 11<sup>th</sup>, in the face of the threatening pressure of partisan bands that were taking shots here and there, measures were taken to reinforce the defense of the city, which was assumed by Gen. Giuseppe Gianni (one of the generals who came to Pola after the dissolution of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army dependant commands): clashes took place with rifle exchanges.

At evening, at 21:00, a German parliamentarian was arrested at the barrier of the road leading to Trieste, who informed that a armored division in march would arrive in Pola at 23:00 and invoked him not to resist, otherwise "the town would be immediately attacked by Land and air, and the garrison and citizenship would have suffered the consequences of their betrayal."

Also heard the opinion of Gen. Gianni, the admiral ordered to leave the German troops free, using the cap. vasc. [Captain] Alberto Parmigiano (Commander of the Schools, whose students constituted a significant part of the chosen units, located along the defensive front).

At 21:30 he appeared at the Navy command the colonel of a armored regiment, accompanied by the Major of naval engineers Umberto Bardelli (1), and at 22:00 with his chief of staff also the Gen. Raabe, commander of the pre-announced Division.

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(1) Major Bardelli had voluntarily joined the Germans by being licensed. He was killed by partisans near Ivrea.

A meeting then followed, which was also called by the civil authorities; Gen. Raabe announced that at 15:00 of the following day (September 12), the German military authority would take military and civilian powers for the city of Pola.

The admiral accepted the conditions dictated by the transfer of powers without remarks as "he had no intention of claiming the right to command the base in the German context nor to establish or accept any form of cooperation for himself and for his subordinates".

After the disarmament, the military offered three alternatives: - collaboration with the Germanic armed forces in the city of Pola;

- collaboration in the field of work in Germany;
- return to their own homes, for those with more than 45 years of age, in case of non-cooperation.

The yield, regulated by the Navy Command orders, took place without special accidents and with safeguarding procedures as far as possible the appearance, under the direct responsibility of the chief of staff Adm. Strazzeri. At 15:00 on the 12<sup>th</sup>, the German Command took over the powers.

Nobody agreed to fight with the Germans; The answers to the last two alternatives were being sent to the concentration camp in Ljubljana, where a small part of the staff opted to join the Germans; A part of the officers and the sailors managed to disappear, escaping to the outside, with the tacit consent and with the help of their commanders.

The admiral and his chief of staff were on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> confined to their rooms; then on October 9, they moved to Venice, where - after long interrogations were made, they started to leave for Germany as prisoners.

*e) Fiume - Sussak,*

The Navy Command was headed by cap. vasc. rich. [Captain (res.)] Alfredo Crespi and was in the jurisdiction of the V Army Corps (Gen. Squero) belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army. The defense of the Fiume - Sussak port was entrusted to the Army and commanded by Gen. Rolla, dependent on Gen. Squero. The command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army (Gen. Robotti) resided in Sussak.

Depending on the Navy Command, the Submarine School and the dependent ship, local use vessels, minesweeping ships and

maritime vigilance, a ship used for the transport of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army (which had jurisdiction over the whole of Dalmatia). There were ships under construction and repair at the Quarnaro yards, under the supervision of naval engineers and naval offices. They were also dependent on Navy Fiume 16 commands or port offices, which also functioned as Naval Commands.

Fiume's fate was closely linked to the change of the Army's High Commanders, which took place on the night of 9 to 10 September: while Gen. Robotti had made provisions clearly to resist the Germans, his successor Gen. Gambara handled the surrender on the morning of 10, opening the gates of the city to the German troops (1).

Conclusion of the negotiations in the afternoon, Gen. Gambara ordered Commander Crespi to:

- make naval vehicles available to the families of officers and civil servants;
- arranging the transfer to Italy of the reserve fund of the Bank of Italy;

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(1) Gen. Gambara arrived from Rome at Sussak, after conferring in Padua with Gen. Gariboldi at 13:00 of September 9, working under the order from the Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Roatta to set up a "Gambara Command" with two Army Corps of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army and two of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to operate in the area between Padua and Fiume. To the 8<sup>th</sup> Army was retained the XXV Corps and a few other troops, and at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army the XVIII Corps (which was in Dalmatia) and troops scattered in the islands south of Veglia. This radical organic-operative change, conceived on September 8, before having the notion of the imminent proclamation of the armistice, put into serious crisis at a time in a very delicate hour the whole military organization of Veneto, Venezia Giulia and the Istria. Gen. Gambara reported having been ordered not to apply Memo 44, which greatly surprised Gen. Robotti. At 18:00 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Gen. Gambara was able to call the Supreme Command in Rome and which responded that Memo 44 had to be applied, but in order to avoid fights or serious accidents. Gen. Robotti issued the following directives (attenuating those already given by him to the entire army) to the troops who remained and then left Sussak to move to Dalmatia with the steamer *Daino*, that was in the Fiume at his disposal. He left Fiume for Losinj on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, but from Losinj did not consider it cautious to go south without a torpedo ship [Destroyer or Torpedo boat] escort and on the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> he decided to reach Venice with his staff, where he arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup> and where he fell prisoner of the Germans. After these occupied the city. Gen. Gambara, change the resistance guidelines to the Germans given by Gen. Robotti, he ended up making common cause with them, so much that he became chief of staff of Graziani, while Gen. Robotti - as mentioned - were tried by the special court of the socialist republic.



- immediately remove all the vessels present (motor sailing, motor fishing trawlers, etc.);
- take advantage of sailboats and streamers, if any, to carry personnel and material of the quartermaster.

All this is possible by midnight on the 10<sup>th</sup>, having the Germans present on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

On the contrary, they entered Rijeka on the 16<sup>th</sup>, held by the resistance given both from the units of the Italian troops in obedience to the first orders of the gen. Robotti, and by Yugoslav partisans.

The interference of the latter was particularly felt in Rijeka. From the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup>, demonstrations of increasing intensity began in the city, staged especially by Croatian partisans and accompanied on the 9<sup>th</sup> by the launch of anti-Italian manifestations by an almost surely Croatian aircraft.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> the partisans, surprising the good faith of the garrisons, managed to temporarily occupy a road block and some forts. Driven back, they resumed on morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> to appear before the various military and civilian locations in Sussak, stating that they no longer recognize the Italian authorities and of wanting to settle in their stead. Against the Navy, such attempts were executed at Sussak's workshop and torpedo depot, at the submarine barracks, at the harbor masters office and at the light house.

To avoid occupation, Commander Crespi asked for aid from the Army, and at midday Gen. Gambara gave him the assistance of the carabinieri. But before the partisan invasion, the same Command of Gambara cleared Sussak, followed by the Command of the Fiume - Sussak base, and retired to the Fiume by stopping the ancient border on the bridge joining Sussak to Fiume over the Eneo River.

As a result, the partisans settled on the bridge and began to seize the weapons of Italian troops in transit to Fiume, disarming them.

Meanwhile, also in the Fiume area, defections of personnel were taking place, and the commander Crespi, faced with the upsurge of events between the double threat of the Germans and the partisans, who in turn were enemies among them, favored all the exoduses by interpreting the orders of Gen. Gambara, so that at 01:00 on the 11<sup>th</sup> the port of Fiume was completely empty. had finally departed the last boat, loaded with people and things. Further requests for means to evacuate by sea (the only way possible,

since all the outside communications were interrupted) could not be given course.

Shortly before noon of the 11<sup>th</sup>, commander Crespi carried out his duties, including the relocation of the personnel of the 16 port offices dependent on him to Fiume, and to make unusable ships unable to move, leaving Fiume with the tugboat *Ragusa* (arrived three hours earlier from Sussak) with Colonel of the Port Renato Corsi, various officers and other employees, directed to Pola, where he intended to move to contact the Naval Command From which it depended. He arrived in Cherso - after collecting soldiers encountered during sailing on various vessels - and feeling the precarious situation in the Pola area, he decided to continue to Ancona where he arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup>; In agreement with Commander Menegali, who now could no longer communicate with Rome, sent unrestricted license to the staff who had come with him and he himself reached Livorno - where he was with his family - and died on 26 May 1944 or the hardships encountered fleeing here and there in order to escape capture.

His departure from Rijeka was judged - when facts could be ascertained - premature, as it happened with the last departure, as the situation in Fiume was still fluid.

Prior to leaving Fiume, he had summoned Colonel of naval engineers Antonio Parilli (head of Navalgenio) and Lieutenant Col. of naval weapons Mansueto Salvi (head of Navalarmi), telling them to wait for the Germans with the protection and assistance tasks of the workers and the military who could not leave. His subsequent communication with him by the *Ragusa* did not come to the destination, and they remained. Colonel Parilli took over the command of the staff and every service left on site, made available to Gen. Gambarà: He stayed in the Fiume until the end of the war, forming a center of assistance masquerading by a totally inefficient collaboration, so that his behavior was, after the conflict ended, favorably judged.

As far as naval ships are concerned, we can summarize the events:

- Military ships.

The Submarines *Oraria* and *Ruggero Settimo* departed regularly to Taranto. The Submarine *Ametista* also contributed to it, but scuttled itself in the conditions described in the previous paragraph b.

Departed the *Quarnerolo*, the ship of the Submarine School, with all the school staff, reaching Brindisi.

Instead, they were sabotaged or not (under the direction of Col. Parilli), according to their state of preparation being three or more months: DD *Pigafetta*; The TB *Spica*, *Fionda*, *Balestra* and *Stella Polare* (which were under construction), *Veza* and *T.3* (which were in work); Three tugs.

- Mercantile ships.

Eight steamers departed, all loaded with staff and equipment, including crew members of ships unable to go to sea. Among these are the *Leopardi* (paragraph 12-d); *Iaderna* with the treasurer of the Bank of Italy who landed in Ancona, then to Volosca where he ended up being captured by the Germans; The *Mocenigo*, auxiliary cruiser, who reached Taranto after having touched Ancona; Three steamships loaded with 2<sup>nd</sup> Army personnel. They stayed in Fiume, sabotaged, three steamships.

There were also 14 trawlers departing to various locations on the Italian shore of the Adriatic, from Porto Corsini down; Numerous smaller boats of every kind.

To the organization of the departures Col. Corsi presided with great diligence the commander of the port.

## 23<sup>rd</sup> EVENTS IN THE BASES OF DALMATIA.

Spalato was the seat of the Naval Command of Dalmatia (Maridalmazia), whose commander was the Adm. Div. [Rear. Adm.] Antonio Bobbiese.

He was responsible for the Command of Sebenico (cap. vasc. rich. [Capitan (res.)] Pietro Tacchini) and the four Navy Commanders of Spalato (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Riccardo Lesca), Ragusa (cap. vasc. rich. [Capitan (res.)] Alfredo Berardinelli), Ploce (cap. freg. rich. [Commander (res.)] Carlo Fecia di Cossato), Zara (cap. freg. c. [Commander (acting)] Giuseppe Rossi).

It was the primary task of Maridalmazia to ensure the security of traffic in the Dalmatian archipelago, rather intense traffic due to the scarcity of communications on the mainland, which forced the use of the sea route for connections and transports between the coastal towns and - necessarily - between these and the islands and between one and the other island.

Even in Dalmatia, as in Istria, and even more accentuated, the interference of the partisan bands influenced the events and locations where the Navy Commands were cut off

The motherland, with whom they could not communicate, was involved in the collapse of the Army troops (XVIII Army Corps already mentioned), which in turn had no orders following the exhibited events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Command. It is also reflected that, on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Croatia proclaimed the annexation of Dalmatia by radio, under the protection of German forces.

In the events of Ragusa and Ploce it was possible to mention, dealing with paragraph 12 - and the sinking of the TB *T. 8*. They were captured by the Germans TB *T. 7* and a motorboat.

There was nothing particular at Zara: the Navy personnel could not do anything but follow the fate of the Army troops, evacuating toward the offshore islands.

We would therefore say what was happening in the two main maritime centers of Spalato and Sebenico. We will also talk about Teodo (Bay of Cattaro) because it is geographically belonging to Dalmatia although it is dependent on the Navy Command of Albania.

a) *Spalato*.

In Spalato Adm. Bobbies, had news of the armistice, given on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the Navy Commander (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Lesca) the order to prepare all the naval means in condition to sail for the transfer to Italy of all the personnel, with the exception of a group of 100 men with Commander Lesca himself, who would remain to safeguard the works owned by the Navy. Commander Lesca executed the order and chose among the 100 volunteer staff willing to stay; at the same time he dispersed the men in the places provided by the defense plan.

He states, in his report, that on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> at the flag-bearer ceremony, the population demonstrated sympathy for Italian troops.

Towards 10:00 the following morning, September 10, Adm. Bobbiese reconfirmed the order to make ready all the means for the departure, but at the same time disposed that all Marina personnel would stay there, postponing boarding at another time. The Maritime Director (1) ordered to prepare the available steamers for

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(1) The Maritime Director is a port officer, with the rank of Major General or of Colonel, who oversees the captains and port offices within the jurisdiction of the Maritime Directorate. He may also hold the command of the port captain in which he is

the transfer of Italian civilians to Italy: this transfer also countermanded the departure in the afternoon.

It is clear that the Adm. Bobbies - found in occupied and non-national territories - had the first idea to evict (and a similar directive passed on to the Commanders of other locations in Dalmatia); Then he thought about it and, while keeping the naval ships in motion for the moment, canceled the decision. And since Maridalmazia and Navy Commanders had no means of offering appreciable resistance, he would remain to share the fate of the Army troops, which were entrusted with the defense of the entire Dalmatian coast.

Military naval ships departed at 18:00 but did not embark land personnel. It was two TB (*Giovannini* and *T. 5*), a tugboat, two tugboats, a minelayer, a tanker, and two motorized sailboats. Four other small ships and the Mas 431, which were inefficient, then fell into German hands. Seaplanes of maritime reconnaissance were also launched for a Puglia (Taranto or Brindisi).

The orders and the counter-orders of Maridalmazia and the departure of the military navy produced a sense of disorientation and discontent among the staff: in the night a group of sailors tried to embark on the support ship *Curzola*, also departing but the energetic intervention of Commander Lesca's obliged them to give up their attempt and return to their posts.

Meanwhile, the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> was given the order to burn the archives, while the safe containing the funds of the Navy Command was brought to the GB *Illiria*, held at disposal of Navy.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, several attacks of German bombers followed, which particularly aimed at steamer and motorboats leaving the harbor to escape the bombing. The *Illiria* also went out to anchor at Bua Island and aboard a number of officers and cut off soldiers who had climbed onboard before leaving the mooring at the Spalato quay. In order to safeguard the sailors from unnecessary losses, in the event of repeated bombardments, Commander Lesca had an order to decentralize the staff on the periphery of the city: he executed the order with the 600 men around, forming the force of the Navy on the spot, not without to say the Chief

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resides. Therefore the order to the Spalato Maritime Director was to be executed not only in Spalato, but in all ports of Dalmatia.

of staff of Maridalmazia that the Command would remain unprotected.

With the departure of all the ships in Spalato, Adm. Bobbies left Spalato in the night between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, with his chief of staff and other officers of the Command, using the vessel *Illiria* (on which ship's commander ten. vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Alfredo Bozzano had returned to Spalato in the afternoon to get orders) for the ship. This ship was not found at Bua's berth because she had departed - without waiting for the return of the commander - on the initiative of the non-commissioned officers who were asked to return with the ship to Italy by soldiers of the Army (1).

Adm. Bobbies had taken the decision to leave the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, after conferring with Gen. Becuzzi (Commander of the "Bergamo" Division, responsible for the territory): it had been recognized that once the naval and aerial units assigned to Maridalmazia departed, the admirable task of the admiral had essentially ceased, so that he could leave Spalato to move to Lago, the most remote of the islands, and then try to get in touch with Higher Authorities to arrange the provision of supplies to Spalato and means of transporting troops to Italy, that it was not foreseeable they could remain long under the double pressure of the Partisans and the Germans.

Not having found the *Illiria* in Bua, Adm. Bobbies landed at Cazza where he could call the Naval Commander of Lagosta (capitano corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Alfredo Verra). He knew that these, following the order of the Army Command from which he depended, was preparing the island's clearing to the Gargano.

Immediately moving to Lagosta and examining the situation on the spot, the admiral ordered the suspension of operations to clear and resume the defensive order; He gathered the staff

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(1) On the *Illiria*, the only official was the commander, while the officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> was on leave. "The ship left the Bua anchorage at 21:00 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, justifying the early departure at the command of the Bosun with the pretext not to fall into the hands of partisans present in Bua. She headed for Sant'Andrea di Lissa, with the intention of continuing to Lagosta, sent a Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> Class to Cazza to get news and here, by telephoning Lagosta, he had from Commander Bozzano the communication to wait for him at Cazza. After several hours of waiting, the second leader returned to Sant'Andrea without Commander Bazzano, who came to Cazza shortly after the departure of the officer. On the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>, the *Illiria*, without the commander, left Lissa headed to Brindisi where she arrived on September 17 after embarking other cut off soldiers at Pelagosa.

to revive the fighting spirit, but realized that it was not easy to do.

There were present in Lagosta the *T. 5*, three anti-sub vessels, the minesweeping units of Ragusa and Lagosta.

On the evening of 12<sup>th</sup>, following bad news, the admiral decided to resume and carry out the clearing of the island quickly.

"Following the fall of Ragusa, the evacuation of Curzola and the resulting total isolation of Lagosta - he wrote under the date of September 13 - considering the low availability of food and especially of water, the lack of garrison and his spirit extremely depressed, given the persistent lack of news about the political - military situation in the peninsula, while the need to inform as soon as possible about the fate of Spalato, I decide to carry out the unloading of the ships, personnel and all the weapons of Navy Lagosta along the Vieste - Brindisi route in the next night... In addition, the growing partisan infiltration from nearby Curzola would surely impose the alternative of having to surrender arms to the terrible and inconsiderate partisans of an Italian domain and also of a co-dominium, or to try to fight them with the men I had available".

During the day of the 13<sup>th</sup> Lagosta was held under German air control; In the early hours of the afternoon the *T.5* and the other boats were repeatedly machine-gunned and bombarded, along with others in transit with troops in withdraw towards the Gargano.

Late at night, all ships left Lagosta in convoy guided by the cap. vasc. [Captain] Lombardi di Lomborgo (who was the chief of staff of Maridalmazia), directed to Vieste where they would have requested orders for the continuation of the journey to Bari or Brindisi. The admiral with route *T. 5* directly to Brindisi, where he entered the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> after knowing from an armed motor sailboat of outer vigilance that Brindisi was in Italian hands.

The behavior of the Adm. Bobbiese was then carefully examined: his departure from Spalato was considered premature and hastened his subsequent abandonment of Lagosta, before he had made the best possible way to get in touch with the senior military authorities to receive the directives after he informed them of the situation.

On the night between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, the partisans entered the Naval Command of Spalato looting it. Commander Lesca went to the Yugoslav Partisan Command in the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> and informed him that

The Navy would occupy the Oceanographic Institute building to accommodate the sailors and firmly asserted that the Naval buildings were respected and considered to be its property: the Partisan Command accepted and at sunset the transfer of personnel to the Oceanographic Institute took place.

In the following days there were pressure from the partisans to induce Commander Lesca and his employees to join them; But he refused. Left without food, dissolved the Command and united the sailors to the units of the “Bergamo” Division, which had jurisdiction over the territory of Spalato.

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, a group of soldiers could leave for Italy with three motorized sailboats granted by the Partisan Command; A fourth motorboat departed on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> arrived from Italy a convoy of steamer led by cap. vasc. [Captain] Lombardi di Lomborgo and that same night departed after embarking on as many sailors and soldiers as possible.

The 26<sup>th</sup> partisan bands entered the city, destroying works and installations.

On 27 March the first German troops appeared and in the following days the occupation of the Spalato area was complete.

On October 4, all the officers and the military remained in the area began to be transported by truck convoy to the interior, and then proceeded to the concentration camps in Germany.

*b) Sebenico.*

In Sebenico, the Command of the Maritime Military Sector (cap. vasc. rich. [Captain (res.)] Pietro Tacchini) made arrangements with the Army Command to resist Germanic occupation, but when the German motorized column approached the city, no resistance was offered to them and so their tanks could penetrate over the bridge, which had not been blown, on the access road from the north to the city. The break-through, which occurred on the morning of September 11, was quick and sudden: shortly the tanks arrived on the docks of the harbor before any reaction from the Naval units was possible, but they managed to damage some of the installations and a number of ships present.

In Sebenico in the imminence of the armistice, there were two TB T.6 and T.8, the two Mas 430 and 433, minelayer *Pasman*, three motorboats, the tanker *Cherca*, GB *Levrera* and a motor sailboat.



Of these ships the Mas 430, the *Pasman*, the three motorboats and the motor sailboat were in the hands of the Germans in Sebenico.

The rest were not on September 8<sup>th</sup> at Sebenico, but at sea or in other places.

*T. 6* was for a few days in the service of escorting traffic in the Dalmatian channels: the 10<sup>th</sup> had orders to go to Losinj, but in the doubt that the island was already occupied by the Germans, changed course for Cesenatico, where it arrived at 11:30 on the 11<sup>th</sup>. She tried to get information about the situation in Ancona, where he was going to go to get oil and go south: as she failed to connect with Ancona, her commander (ten. Vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Guido Suttora) decided to sink the ship off Cesenatico.

Of the *T. 8* has already been said. The *Mas 433* was in Uliveti, where it reached the Italian coast. The *Cherca* was in Lagosta for island water supply. Entering Spalato, she was captured by the Germans. The *Levrera* was instead in Zara, where she fell into German hands.

*c) Teodo and Mouth of Cattaro (Graph 7).*

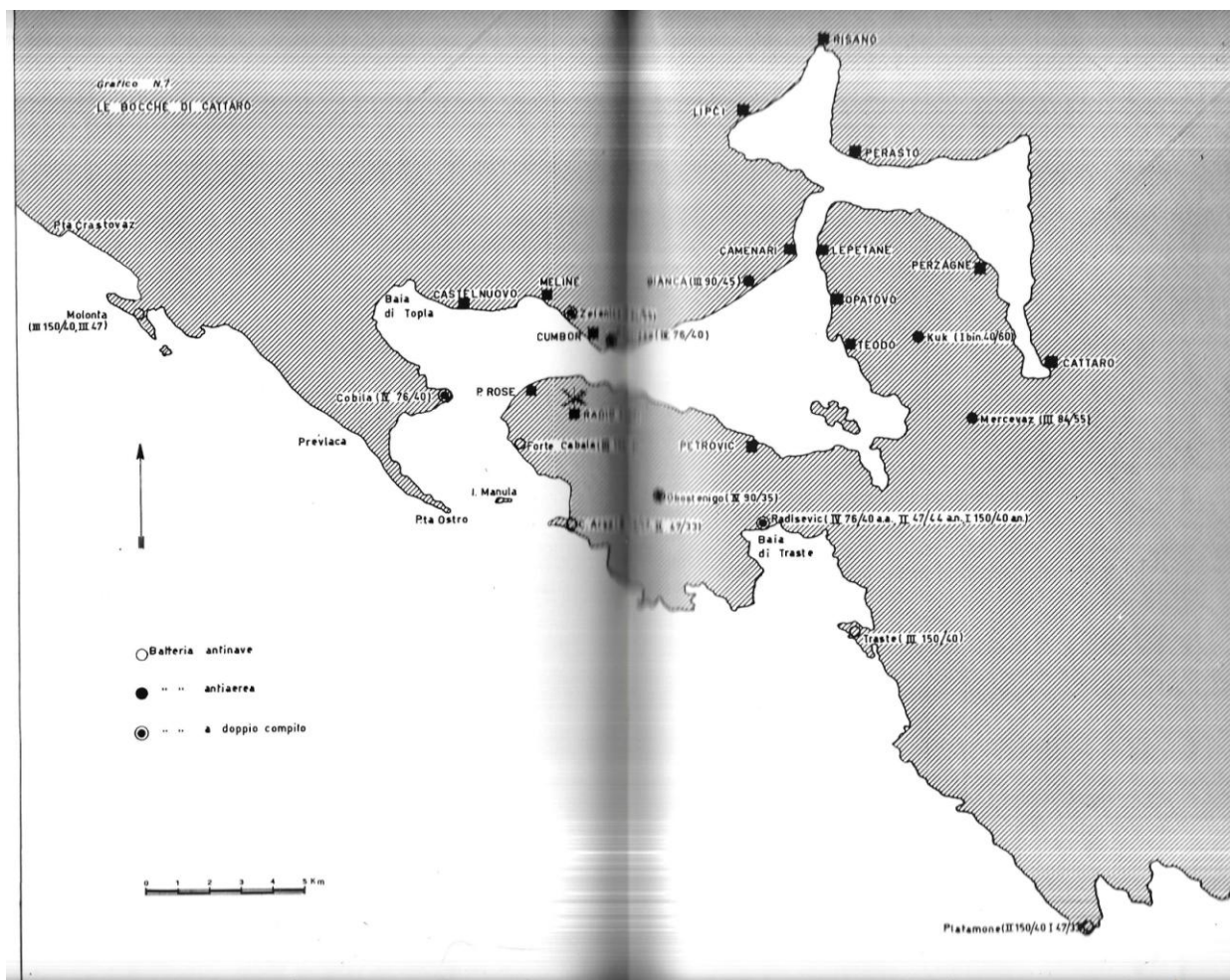
The mouths of Cattaro, where Teodo was the seat of the Navy Command, was a theater - unlike the other ports in Dalmatia - of fierce fighting where soldiers and sailors, brothers a brotherhood, they were known for tenacious valor.

We treat it here, though it was Marialbania, because Cattaro is geographically part of Dalmatia so much that, when in March 1941 Maridalmazia was established, it depended on it. Subsequently, it was included in the jurisdiction of the Navy Command in Albania, from which the Navy Command of Teodo depended on September 8, 1943.

The Naval Teodo commander was cap. vasc. [Captain] Mario Azzi, who depended for territorial defense by the Commander of city Gen. of the Div. Buttà (who commanded the "Emilia" division), resident in Castelnuovo, in turn dependent on Gen. Roncaglia of the XIV Corps resident in Podgoritza, part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army commanded by Gen. Dalmazzo based in Tirana. The town was subdivided into two areas: the eastern one commanded by Gen. Brigo Negro based in Cattaro and the western one held by the colonel commanding the 120<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment.

The town had a remarkable naval and anti-aircraft defense, consisting of 13 batteries with a total of 51 pieces: 16 of 150 mm and 35 of small-caliber,

## The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict



In the imminence of the date of the armistice there were in the Mouth of Cattaro the Ms 47, the Mas 434, the steamer *Fanny Brunner*, some tugs and various minesweeping trawlers.

On the morning of September 8<sup>th</sup>, following the presence of a submarine signaling in front of Durazzo, they were entered into the mouths of Kotor, with a signal from the lighthouse of Ostro Point, the tanker *Annarella* with 3500 tons of naphtha and the steamer *Milano* with a unit of 1500 German soldiers (according to Commander Azzi was 1000) armed with automatic weapons and with 9 heavy machine guns; The two ship were respectively escorted by TB *T. 1* and *Abba* and both were directed to Durazzo.

Badoglio's statement about the armistice produced a brief period of disorientation, as it was unclear what attitude it was about the partisans (up to that time our enemies), the population and the Germans. But immediately after the Command of the Fleet ordered the state of alarm. From Marialbania came the order to suspend all departures of ships and not to continue the *Annarella* and *Milano*.

On the day of the 9<sup>th</sup>, attempts were made to escape by sea of civilian and military personnel and the removal of food from the warehouses, stopped by the energetic intervention of Commander Azzi.

In the afternoon, the German soldiers in the *Milano* were disembarked at Perzagne, allowing them, after intense discussions, to carry with them only individual weapons: the *Abba* supervised the landing operations, ready to intervene with weapons if the Germans had not disembarked in the agreed terms.

On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> she was severely struck by Stukas bombs, as he was about to enter the Bouche, the big tanker *Ardor*; left to drift, having lost half of the men among whom was the commander and the chief engineer, she ended up stranding after repeated tentative attempts to take her in tow; sank after a new attack by German aircraft. The steamer *Diocleziano*, who followed the *Ardor* at a distance, arrived without accidents.

On the same evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> Commander Azzi spoke to Adm. Tarantini of Marialbania, who told him there where ongoing in Tirana negotiations, and told him that the fate of himself and of his staff, already guarded by the Germans who were now Masters of Durazzo, would be affected by the outcome of the negotiations.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> they took off for Taranto the 9 efficient Cant Z. 501s of marine reconnaissance.

In the evening Gen. Buttà summoned Commander Azzi to inform him that the Command of the XIV Corps had announced the arrival in the city of a German truck convoy, authorized - as a result of agreements - to take possession of the heavy batteries and heavy artillery, leaving in our possession individual weapons and various warehouses.

Commander Azzi immediately launched the military ships, namely the two TB *Abba* and *T. 1*, Ms 47 and the minesweeping trawlers, with about 400 soldiers onboard, sailors, airmen and militias of the batteries; at the same time he ordered Antivari to be cleansed (where there was only the harbor master and some sighting stations) by profiting from two minesweepers and the Mas 434, expressly sent.

The departure of the military units from Teodo produced a state of restlessness among the remaining personnel, which was calmed by the intervention of the chief of the various services, urged by Commander Azzi to persuade the men that departures should be gradually organized. Nonetheless, after midnight on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the illegal departure of six small ships loaded with personnel, including some officers, occurred, while for the other six already on the way to the exit from the Bouches, the Command made time to intervene, forcing her to return to moorings with the intimidating fire of the batteries.

At 03:30 of the 12<sup>th</sup>, a German officer was presented to the Navy Command, requesting to stay with his men (one thirty) in Lepetane waiting to ferry to Camenari; was authorized by Commander Azzi and he settled there but did not leave.

At 10:00 there was a meeting in Castelnuovo between Gen. Buttà, Commander Azzi, commanders of the two halves of the town, and the commander with some officers of the German truck convoy that had arrived the previous night. Negotiations only reached agreement on how to dispose of the batteries; for the other claims made by the Germans (to keep the *Armarella*, *Milano* and *Diocletian* available to them, to bring together the battery-personnel to ask for those who want to cooperate with them) was made under our opposition - particularly by the Commander Azzi - and passed the decision to the Higher Command. As to *Fanny Brunner*, who with 300 civilians on board was waiting to leave, the Germans did not object.

Commander Azzi wrote, believing that things would take a nasty turn: "After the end of the session I declare to the Commander of the town that my regret for the departure in the night of some naval vessels against my will it has almost

turned into satisfaction, because at least they have left. This of course does not mean, I would add, that I let others leave, because I will never split the fate of our sailors, nor will I assign them a position of privilege, compared to the comrades of the army."

Meanwhile, some batteries had been occupied by the Germans, with interruption of telephone connections with the Command.

The psychological situation, which seemed to slip towards a passive resignation to events, underwent a radical change on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>. All the officers, gathered in the Navy Base, worried and exasperated at a time of German domination that insidiously was tightening the circle around Naval Base, they told Commander Azzi to inform them of the situation and the meeting ended with a consistent statement of the will to fight instead of passively yielding to force. Commander Azzi immediately informed the Commander of the town, who he approved.

Since on the day of the 13<sup>th</sup> new German abuses, an action plan was set in which Navy was assigned the task of fighting the Germans for Lepetane, who opposed, among other things, the withdrawal by us of the food contained in that warehouse.

The Naval unit, destined to operate, consisted of: 110 sailors in three platoons; 50 legionnaires of the Maritime Militia; 30 carabinieri [Policemen] destined for the Navy. The action should have started at 05:00 on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. At 03:30 the Navy's unit moved from Teodo to Lepetane, divided into three marching columns to wrap the site by attacking it from three sides: during the march, the unit was joined by a company of machine gunners.

The attack on the Germans began shortly after 05:15: the men in the unit struggled with excitement, exhorted by the example of Commander Azzi, who - joined at the central column - penetrated alone into a house where 8 Germans were barricaded, he targeted them with hand grenades, forcing them to surrender: in the second resumption of his bold action, he joined Marshal [warrant officer] Fuscaldo and the sottonocchiere [junior helmsman] Fusai.

Meanwhile, the troops of the Army, forming the garrison of the town, were fighting at various points, particularly at Cobila, at the Gruda airport (above Molonta) and at Teodo. In fighting also they took part in some batteries, which beat positions

occupied by the Germans. The evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> Gen. Buttà was able to telegraph at Brindisi that the first day of combat had closed victoriously for us, but urged the sending of naval vessels for landing troops.

The 15 in the morning the actions returned to Cobila and Gruda. By 17:00, the German soldiers defending Cobila had to surrender to an alpine battalion by handing over their weapons. In Cattaro participated also the two officers, the three non-commissioned officers and 20 sailors of the port captain, with their chief commander Enrico Quilici.

Naturally, the requested reinforcements from Italy could not arrive, and even if they could, they would not have arrived in good time. Thus, after the 15<sup>th</sup>, the initiative of our forces ran out and, in the face of the overwhelming predominance of German forces coming from within the territory, the base ended up being occupied in a few days.

On the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> on the still existing naval vehicles (including the steamers *Diocleziano*, *Annarella*, *Fanny Brunner* and other smaller units) began as many men as possible, including General Buttà with various members of the Command of the "Emilia" Division.

Commander Azzi could not personally arrange departures and assistance because in Lepetaneera's action he was severely wounded to a shoulder and hospitalized in our Meline hospital. but he strove to follow the unfolding of events, giving suggestions through people who went to visit him and from hospital medical officers..

On that day and a half of the fighting we suffered the loss - between dead and wounded - of about 200 men, of whom 50 were members of the Navy. The Germans had 75 dead, 31 wounded and 67 prisoners.

All those who could not leave because of lack of means or who were unable to leave because they were hospitalized such as the commander Azzi naturally ended in prison camps in Germany. Commander Azzi repatriated at the end of 1945, crossing the Brenner border on a military train on 11 October. His behavior was exemplary throughout his forcible imprisonment, strength of mind, and energy with which he sought to curb the excesses of the hardness of German prisoners against all his fellow inmates.

## 24<sup>th</sup> EVENTS IN THE BASES OF ALBANIA.

### a) *Durazzo*.

Durazzo was the seat of the Naval Command of Albania (Marialbania) commanded by the Adm. Div. Manlio Tarantini. The Durazzo Base was included in the military sector commanded by Brigadier Gen. Peano, who is a member of the IV Army Corps (Gen Spatocco), which in turn is part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army (Gen. Dalmazzo), headquarter of the Command in Tirana, as mentioned above.

From Marialbania depended on the Navy Commanders of Durazzo (cap. freg. rich. [Commander (res.)] Aldo Castellani), Teodo (cap. vasc. [Captain] Mario Azzi) and Valona (cap. vasc. [Captain] Vincenzo Novari).

The Navy had three batteries in Durazzo: one of 120 located on a high dominant access to the anchorage, one dominating the city and the harbor, another 76 on the beach to the east of the harbor; a detachment of sailors provided the various services.

Gen. Peano was responsible for the defense of Durazzo, which he had 3 garrison battalions and 2 coastal units divided between the various watch and guard posts; He also had eight different caliber cannons and a dozen machine guns.

There was also a German Command (Major Gòb) in Durazzo, who had a group of three 88 batteries and various self-propelled guns of 37 and 20 mm.

There were in port on September 8 the two TB *Pilo* and *Missori*, Aux. Cr. *Arborea*, 7 steamers and 2 motorboats, 2 tugs and some armed motorized sailing vessels for minesweeping. In the berth, outside the harbor, there were the two Covs. *Sfinge* and *Scimitarra*.

The steamships were waiting to be convoyed to Italy, escorted by the first three ships listed; Had arrived on the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> from Bari and, after being discharged, had been detained following sightings of a enemy submarine in the waters of the Lower Adriatic. On September 8, their return trip had not been judged sufficiently far from dangers, either by Marialbania and by Navy Brindisi who they were in contact by telephone.

On the news of the armistice Adm. Tarantini came up with the idea of starting the convoy, but - consulting with the Adm. Rubartelli, Naval Commander in Brindisi - did not implement it, despite the insistence of the commanders of the ships destined for the escort. They left

following the order sent directly by Supermarina (the *Scimitarra* then went on to Pescara, as it has been seen).

Immediately after 20:30 (after receiving the Badoglio message announcing the cessation of hostilities against the Anglo - American), Admiral joined the staff of Navy Durazzo and spoke of the need to maintain calm and discipline. He certainly had to step up the vigilance, strengthen the pickets at the guard positions, and be prepared for any eventuality; similar arrangements were made to the Navy Commands of Teodo and Valona. On the other hand, the "Brenner" division (which had jurisdiction over the territory of Durazzo) prepared a armored unit, also in view of any disorder among the Albanian population.

However, the admiral was not concerned about the ships in the harbor because he did not suspect surprise German strikes, as the Army forces around Durazzo were abundant, and not having the Germans in place but those about 400 men, subdivided into their batteries, While there was news of other Germanic forces moving towards Durazzo,

On the 9<sup>th</sup> was quiet until 18:00, when Maj. Göb presented himself to the admiral the with two officers, with a general order which he relieved not to allow any ships to leave the harbor, otherwise any means would be used to prevent departures.

Adm. Tarantini replied that any hostile action would be met by action from the Italian side, and the Major got three hours to report to the general and bring the definitive answer. The admiral immediately ordered the ships to get ready for departure within two hours of the order, and the batteries and ships were ready to take action; Then went to Gen. Spatocco to ask him for the Army Force assistance if needed. As he conveyed to the general, he knew that German columns were moving from several directions to Valona and that in Tirana our Commands were dealing with the Germans.

At 21:00, Major Göb returned, confirming the ban on the ships leaving. Despite the attitude of expectation of the Command of Army of Tirana, the admiral was able to obtain from Gen. Spatocco in anticipation of an German attack on the port, the available batteries of the Army Corps were lined up to counter the German 88s, and that a strong "Brennero" Division's tank unit and a mobile 105 cannon group be ready to intervene; From Gen. Peano



obtained the increase of the guard at the access points to the docks with a company of machine-gunners and the obstruction of the gates themselves with heavy truck trailers.

When at 22:30 a German officer appeared in front of the harbor, at the head of a unit, with the aim of occupation, the Admiral saw with the Gen. Peano and, in order to gain time, managed to keep the German away, giving him, at his request, the word of honor that no ship would seek to get away or to damage themselves: but the Germans, wary, illuminated the harbor all night with searchlights.

Shortly before 06:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup> - that is, at dawn - the German General Gramm presented himself with an officer at the gates, followed by a large armored unit. As the general conveyed to the lieutenant colonel in charge of defending the gates, the German soldiers attacked him from behind and - overwhelmed our machine-gunners, disarming them - invaded the harbor.

A fire action was immediately started. The two torpedo boats, who were at the dock, opened fire on the aggressors, imitated by steamer *Marco* and the 76 battery that was on the beach in front of the harbor. The sailors detachment also intervened, while the 120 battery could not intervene effectively because the Germans kept it under the fire of one of their batteries brought to a point defiladed to our shot.

The combat lasted about an hour, until Adm. Tarantini had ordered the cessation for the impossibility of prevailing over the Germans, especially since the forces of the Army had not intervened, as had been agreed and promised.

It is worth mentioning the heroic episode of guardiamarina [midshipman] Giorgio Tafuro of torpedo boat *Missori*, who, after having killed a German officer who wanted a group of men to invade the torpedo boat through the gangway connecting it to the quayside, was killed by the assailants.

During the action, the torpedo boat had 5 deaths and various wounded, including the *Missori's* commander (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Wolfango Mandini); There were others injured on the steamer *Marco*. The 120 battery had a dead and several wounded and the 76 had two dead and several wounded. The Germanic aggressors had in turn numerous losses.

Failure to intervene of the Army units may be attributed to the fact that during the night to the Army Command had come order of not taking any kind of action and not opposing the movements of the German forces,

the outcome of the negotiations: in particular, the port was kept, but avoiding conflicts.

After the battle ceased, it was agreed that the arms had been returned to the Italian military in the port, who had been removed (except those of the essential services) and that the port and the ships remained under German control.

Meanwhile, the situation in Albania was plummeting: negotiations between the Army Command in Tirana and the German Command had already begun on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> on the ceding of batteries, the delivery of individual weapons and the ceding of ships. The Adm. Tarantini had to order Navy Teodo and Navy Valona to comply with the orders given by the local authorities of the Army. To make it short, within the early morning hours of the 11<sup>th</sup> (between 03:00 and 04:00) an agreement was signed between Gen. Rosi (Commander of the Army Group East) and Gen. Bessel, in which the Germans allowed our troops to keep portable weapons against the obligation to give everything else. It was also planned to clear the Italians from Balcania to northern Italy. On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, Major Weiss assumed command of Durazzo and the Adm. Tarantini was virtually a prisoner of the Germans, while in Tirana German paratroopers plunged into the Armed Forces offices, declaring all the staff prisoners.

Adm. Tarantini did not want to embark on the ships, now under German control, to leave for Trieste or Venice, but preferred to stay until the last with his sailors. He left Durazzo on September 28th to Tirana, and there, along with all Navy personnel, began the long land journey that took him to the Sckokken prison camp at Posen in 19 days.

Of the naval ships in Durazzo the Germans used for their traffic along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, also in order to speed up the removal of Italian troops from the Albanian and Yugoslav territories. They embarked on every ship, military and mercantile, a German guard picket made up of about ten men armed with machine gun and rifles.

On September 25, the TB *Pilo* and *Missori* together with the Aux. Cr. *Arborea* left for Trieste escorting five steamships loaded with troops. But at midnight on the same day, during sailing, the crew of TB *Pilo* overwhelmed the German guard of eight men, killing four that were thrown into the sea, and capturing the other four. The torpedo maker therefore abandoned the convoy

and arrived in Brindisi at 08:00 of September 26<sup>th</sup>. The commander ten. Vasc. c. [Lieutenant (brevet)] Giuseppe Faggioni.

The *Missori* continued to serve with Italian personnel under German control until on 6 October during a mission in the waters of Quarnaro the staff - evading the German guard - caused serious damage by sabotage to the ship, which after a long period of repairs in Trieste resumed service under the name of *TA.22* and with German crew at the end of January 1944. At the end of the war he was found sunk in Muggia (Trieste).

As for *Arborea*, who came to Trieste, she was sent by the Germans to Venice, where Italian personnel were landed and replaced with German personnel. The ship sank at Sebenico for air bombardment, under German flag, on January 17, 1944.

Lastly, it is worth remembering that Tug *Porto Conte* (one of the two moored in Durazzo), whose crew at 03:20 on October 6, following a German convoy recently departed from Durazzo, immobilized the German military watchmen and reached the port of Otranto in the morning. She was commanded by the chef helmsman 1st class Primo Cascelli.

*b) Valona, Saseno and Santi Quaranta.*

The military sector Valona - Saseno offered the peculiarity of being a legally occupied territory on the continental side and Italian territory on the island of Saseno. The Navy Command was in Valona, and in Saseno there was a subordinate detachment command (cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Domenico Vigliotta) but - given the particularity mentioned above - the DICAT Commands (Anti-aircraft Defense) and FAM (sea front) had their headquarters in Saseno instead of Valona. The two Commands were connected by two submarine cables through Valona's roadstead, and from Saseno the cables allowed for direct telegraphic and telephone communications with the Naval command of Brindisi.

The territorial defense of the sector of Valona - Saseno was also entrusted to the Army (Brigadier General Luglio).

Shortly after the announcement of the armistice, Commander Novari ordered the state of alert, according to the provisions of the Army Corps Command which informed him – orders from the Army Command - the cessation of hostilities against the Anglo - Americans and the assumption of an attitude of prompt reaction to offenses coming from anywhere else. From that moment on

continue contact with Gen. Lugli, who informed him of the subsequent directives of the Army Corps in connection with the ongoing negotiations with the Germans. On the morning of September 9, on the order of ceding of the batteries of the Army to the Germans, he had telephone instructions from Adm. Tarantini to comply with the directives of the Command of the Sector of the Army of Valona and not to allow the departure of the ships present in the base, including the Motorship *Potestas* chartered by the German authorities.

Towards 18:00 they entered Valona without contrast to any of the first armored German units, occupying the two harbor wharves and placing artillery along the harbor. At 21:00 Commander Novari was introduced to a German officer, who ordered not to launch any ship, punishable by sinking, as well as bombarding the city. He answered that he did not accept impositions and that only obeyed their superiors. Interviewed again Adm. Tarantini, replied that he was waiting for orders from Rome and that it was cautious not to take the ships to sea .

Subsequently, following a new contact with Gen. Lugli, he communicated to the batteries - if a transfer request was made by the Germans - he would have to give further orders: orders that he could not give in after the rush of events.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, after asking instructions from the Army Command about a possible German occupation of Saseno without getting any reply, he turned back to Adm. Tarantini, who ordered him not to resist to avoid accidents, to prepare to throw ammunition into the sea, to keep the ship's crews on board, but without doing sabotage to avoid causing Germanic reactions, to destroy secret archives and documents. He imparted to cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Vigliotta the resulting provisions, without however thinking that they could be imposed on the admiral by the Germans. As he walked from Gen. Lugli to inform him of this, was stopped by the Germans and from that moment kept under surveillance; the connecting cables with Saseno were interrupted and the radio station was occupied, so that before midday on September 10, Commander Novari was completely isolated. On the same day, the German troops completed the occupation of Valona and began transferring to concentration camps of the Italian soldiers.

On the morning of November 11, Commander Novari had to accompany to Saseno some German officers charged with taking

possession to the island; But this was found completely deserted, free of boats in the harbor and with unusable batteries and unusable oil depots damaged by the personnel who had evacuated the island the previous evening.

In the work there were - besides the Aux. Cr. *Pola* (ten. vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Angelo Malfatti) and the *Rovinj* (ten. vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Rinaldo Basso) – the motorship *Potestas*, steamers *Palermo* and *Quadrifoglio*, two landing craft and some motorboats coming from Greek ports. They all fell into Germanic hands.

On September 18, the Italian military was cleared by sea, not by land, using the German controlled steamers. Commander Novari was embarked on the *Pola* that left escorting the *Potestas*. The two ships touched Tendo, where they were ordered to continue to Trieste. Arrived in the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> in Teodo, the two boats - after embarking other Italian soldiers - continued on the afternoon of the 20<sup>th</sup>. At the tip of the Bay of Cattaro, the *Potestas* was struck by shells fired from the surrounding highlands that were in the hands of the Germans; the damage caused the ship to stop. The *Pola*, though hit without any serious consequences, could continue to move offshore. At about 18:00, the *Pola's* crew, with a bold sunrise attack without the knowledge of the commander Novari and the commander of the ship, disarmed the four Germans who formed the armed escort and locked them in a room. The *Pola* then headed for Brindisi, where she arrived on the morning of September 21<sup>st</sup> (1).

In the base of Valona - Saseno the Navy Command, therefore, in a disciplined way, the orders of the authorities of the Army. One thing that he could have done, for example, would be to bring the vessels in Saseno's roadstead, where they could

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(1) The episode about *Potestas* is referred to by cap. vasc. [Captain] Azzi, who was hospitalized at Meline Hospital for wounds in combat on September 20, as it was seen:

"At about 13:00, while the motorship *Potestas*, about 380 soldiers, 40 airmen and 520 sailors of Valona, and the motor boat *Pola*, on board the commander of Navy Valona, started to leave the mouth with German permission to continue, it seems, For Trieste, the *Potestas*, arrived the day before with a national flag and now without the flag, is made the target of machine gun fire and several cannon shots from the battery stationed at point Ostro, this had previously fired a shot at the bow and one astern of the ship which, while stopping the engines, had however

eclipsing in nocturnal hours, as did the small ships with which the detachment of Saseno (about 1200 men) could move to Italy, as we are about to narrate.

On the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> Maridist Saseno received from Navy Valona the written text of the order of the Army Command concerning the behavior to be taken. In the afternoon, Maridist ordered the closure of the door of the obstruction of Valona's work to prevent the possible exit of the *Potestas*, which, as has been said, was hired by the Germans; the Island's batteries were also ordered to shoot on the *Potestas* if she attempted to force obstruction, which was canceled the following morning.

Around 17:00 of the 10<sup>th</sup>, two German motor torpedo boats appeared in front of the obstructions, then went away when they were informed that they could not enter the bay.

Between evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> presented herself at Saseno the *Mas 517* and Csmg [sub hunters] *Vergada* and *Pasman*, coming from Argostoli: the three ships were under the command of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Girolamo Delfino. He had asked for gasoline to go straight to Brindisi, as he had been ordered by Marimorea, but he did not get the supply according to Navy Valona's terms of not starting any ships.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, while Commander Delfino was insisting with Commander Vigliotta to achieve his purpose, the latter received from Navy Valona the order to leave the island be occupied by the Germans without offering resistance, but to be ready to throw in the sea the ammunition if it was ordered, to hold the military and mercantile ships preventing that they would be sabotaged, destroying the secret archives. Commander Vigliotta, thinking that these provisions were dictated by the Germans

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unable kept the momentum to be able to avoid, as later I was told by the commander, to run on the minefield. On the *Potestas*, the white flag is lifted at the stern and at the mast, but the shots directed especially on the deck where people gather are causing many losses (outlined in 18 deaths and 36 wounded, almost all of them in the Navy); The structures of the raft do not suffer any significant damage. The ship stays for some time near point Ostro and then goes back to her berth in Zelenica ... Addresses to the German Commander of the Mouth a protest letter enclosed in copy ... The Italian Naval Staff of the Army And the Air Force still embarked on the *Potestas* were sent by train to Ragusa.”

who were already masters of Valona, telegraphed at 12:15 to Brindisi: "Navy Valona informs me by telephone that negotiations are being made to cede the island to the Germans stop I have the impression that said Command acts under armed pressure stop Please give me instructions." At 18:00 he replied: "Destroy fixed installations and stores trying to bring personnel to Italy with means at your disposal stop Milan stop de Courten".

Doing the ordered destruction operations, all Saseno's staff left the island in the night on board the 19 small ships present and on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> they landed in Brindisi: the three ships of Commander Delfino escorted the convoy.

From Maridist Saseno depended on a nucleus of sailors serving the obstructions of Santi Quaranta; There was also a captain (Caption of the Port Gaspare Pugliese) and two signaling stations, usually receiving orders from Marialbania and sometimes for practical reasons by the nearby Naval Command of Corfu. In the anchorage of Santi Fortanto there were four Italian motorboats and two Albanian motorized sailing vessels, a tugboat and various hulls.

The guards of Santi Quaranta were about 5000 men under the command of a colonel.

Until the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> no order came to Captain Pugliese, nor was the colonel able to give it to him, busy as he was holding up the partisans who wanted to occupy the site.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, arrived at Navy Corfù to the signaling stations of Cape Kephali, the order of Supermarina to destroy the instillation and return to Brindisi, using a motor sailboat: the withdraw was done as ordered.

An analogue order received the other signal station (Lukureski) and his staff descended to Santi Fortanta but could not leave for Brindisi because in the meantime the order had come to not launch any vessel. Captain Pugliese tried to get in touch with Marialbania, but he did not succeed. Meanwhile, the colonel, commander of the garrison, following agreements with the partisans and the Corfu authorities, decided to transfer all his forces to this island, where he was organizing resistance to the Germans. The Navy personnel also went to Corfu and Captain Pugliese moved on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with the last expedition. He was then sent back to Santi Fortanta to direct the troop removal, which would not take place until the last days of September.

25<sup>th</sup> EVENTS IN THE BASES OF GREECE (1).

*a) Territories dependent on the Naval Command of Western Greece (Marimorea Patrasso).*

Adm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Giuseppe Lombardi was commander of Marimorea, resident in Patrasso.

Marimorea was made up of the naval bases of Argostoli (Kefalonia) and Navarino; The Naval Commanders of Corfu, Preveza, Patrasso and Corinth; Numerous Port Offices, via the Patrasso Maritime Department; A group of reconnaissance seaplanes, divided between Preveza (headquarters of the group's command), Patrasso, Argostoli and Corfu; a Squadron Mas at Argostoli; Various small merchant ships requisitioned for local traffic, minesweeping, surveillance and pilot services; A few batteries scattered in the various locations, the vast majority being of the Army and German armed batteries.

Marimorea depended on the Command of the XI Army (General Vecchiarelli) for territorial issues.

They had jurisdiction over the territory of Marimore three Army Corps: the VIII (Marghinotti) in the area from the border between Albania and Preveza included and on Corfu; the XXVI (Gen Bonella) on the other Ionian Islands and the Gulf of Lepanto; The German LXVIII (Gen. Felmy) on the Peloponnese, which was made up of the Italian Divisions "Piemonte" (Gen. Torresan at Patrasso) and "Cagliari" (General Angioy in Nauplia).

In August 1943, the German Naval Captain Magnus, was sent to Patrasso with the functions of commander of the German Navy in western Greece, but Supermarina - but he had succeeded in obtaining that the Magnus was not autonomous, but assigned to Adm. Lombardi with the post of chief of staff for German services.

The situation of the Italian Armed Forces in Greece was particularly delicate, because - after the fall of Sicily - the Germans had sent many powerful army divisions to Greece, they had settled or were arranging coastal and counter-batteries; they had occupied all the airports and - particularly serious - they had centered in their hands the

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(1) Events in the Aegean Islands are dealt with in Volume XVI, published in 1957, entitled "Aegean Events after the Armistice", already cited in footnote 22 - d.



Telegraphic service and telephone communications. They had thus had a clear superiority over the Italian forces, who were presiding over Greece.

On September 8, there were no troops in Patrasso, because the battalion of the Piedmont division intended to guard it was out of the base for rebel raids.

There were several steamships, TB *Monzambano* and some ships for local services.

Half an hour after the announcement of the armistice went to lunch with Adm. Lombardi, who had already invited, Gen. Torresan, cap. vasc. [Captain] Magnus and Gen. Felmy, who had been in the Patrasso area for two days for inspection. The lunch took place without anyone mentioning the armistice, though German guests were repeatedly called on the phone and could not hide an expression of disturbance. However, before lunch ended, a number of rifle shots (due to unconscious manifestations of joy) were heard and a proposal by Gen. Torresan was ordered by telephone in an immediate a mixed Italian-German public order service unit, which in a few hours brought the calm in the city.

Adm. Lombardi, who had arrived at 18:00 with the news of the armistice spread by the foreign radio stations had already given orders to all the commands he employed for the assumption of the state of alert for the immediate departure for Italy of motorboats and steamships ready to move and for the preparation of those who had boilers off. So in a few hours the port of Patrasso was emptied and from other ports, where there were ships, departures took place regularly. In particular, TB *Monzambano* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Alberto Cuomo) had come from Piraeus at 19:00 of the 8<sup>th</sup> with the two steamers *Re Alessandro* and *Ardenne* (German) carrying Germanic units heading to Zakynthos. The two steamships continued on their own for Zakynthos, while the torpedo boat reached Zante at 11:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, after completing a supply of oil in Patrasso.

As the port of the island was now occupied by the Germans, Commander Cuomo went on to Italy, arriving in Taranto the following morning, in execution of the repatriation order he had previously had, after having escaped from various German air strikes. Prior to leaving Zante, he had been able to confer with *Re Alessandro*'s commander and ordered him to attempt to leave or scuttle: the ship sailed and its commander led it to run aground.

At 23:30 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, the admiral sent Supermarina's orders to all the commands, many times we quoted, and the English appeals to the Italian Navy. At the same time he was given the message with which Gen. Vecchiarelli ordered not to turn the guns against the Germans without cause, not to make common cause with the rebels or with any Anglo-American troops that might be landing, to react to any armed violence (without specifying where they originated), to keep discipline with every means, to communicate these directives to the corresponding German Commands.

In the early hours of the 9<sup>th</sup>, the Germans occupied by surprise, with mechanized forces, Patraso, the radio station and the telecommunications center, blockading Gen. Torresan at the seat of his Command; quickly sealed off all the detachments and detached military installations, as well as the weak strongpoints of the Patraso ground defense; last but not least the harbor was occupied.

At 08:00 the admiral presented Captain Magnus to claim the delivery of the port (which was empty) with the machine guns placed on the two entrance piers and the lowering of the flag:: he had a negative response.

At the same time the Admiral received the duplicate written request of Gen. Felmy for collaboration with subordinate command and denunciation of infidelity of units, or repatriation, with the warning that any resistance would be repressed by force of arms.

At 09:00 the admiral was allowed to confer with the Gen. Torresan. As they were in concert, General Vecchiarelli came forward with a new announcement, which stipulated that the Coast Guard should remain in positions until the exchange with German units, but no later than 10:00 on the following day of 10 September; after that time there was no resistance to any Anglo-American action, but only to possible rebels; the troops would be made to return to Italy, after replacing them with German troops, according to the rally and outflow arrangements that would have been communicated; All the weapons had to be handed over to the Germans, except the individual ones for possible defense against the rebels; The delivery of weapons had to start at midday on the same day of the 9<sup>th</sup>.

For the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> was established in Patraso the lowering of the Italian flag: the ceremony took place with military honors "in the presence of a deferent and respectful crowd": in this regard, all the testimonies agree on how much sympathy it was to demonstrate

for us by the Greek people, who were able to conceal part of the weapons of the Partisans, which would have had to be handed over to the Germans.

On the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, meanwhile, a strong German aviation formation had managed to bring back a part of the steamers left during the night, with a demonstration of intimidating force. To them the admiral managed to send the order to sabotage.

On the 9th, 10th and 11th, they followed the directives received by the Command of the XI Army: the admiral enjoyed a relative freedom of movement, which was used to guard against the destruction of secret documents, the distribution of the money to staff, the calm of his employees who proved to be exceptional consistency.

He had evidence, when on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> the admiral first assembled the officers and then all the staff to read them a questionnaire, delivered to him the day before by colonel commander of the German troops of Patrasso. The questionnaire consisted of four points to which the overall answer was yes or no: in the case of a negative response, the admiral was informed that he would be confined to his home. Here they are:

- to recognize the fascist government of Farinacci (Mussolini was still a prisoner at Campo Imperatore);
- submit to the German Command;
- participating Italian soldiers were not employed against Italians;
- participating Italian officers would be responsible for the loyalty to the Germans of the soldiers entrusted to them.

Read the questionnaire in the presence of Captain Magnus 83 officers, out of 83 present, joined the admiral's no. It was the same for all non-officers and sailors. The admiral was acclaimed at the cry "we want to follow our Admiral anywhere." The scene provoked admiration by the commander Magnus.

At 10:30, the ceremony of reading was over, the admiral was accompanied to his home and declared a prisoner of war.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, he was relocated to Kiaton, where he found many generals made prisoners in the Peloponnese. On the 18<sup>th</sup> - following the escape of a general - the treatment was made more severe and the 20<sup>th</sup> Adm. Lombardi, along with others, left for Athens and was transferred from here to Sckokken where he was subjected to indignity

during a long imprisonment, which lasted with moving from camp to camp until January 21, 1945, when he was "liberated" by the Russians, who sent him back to Italy with his companions of misfortune in September 1945.

As for the events in all locations where the Navy was present with commands or port offices dependent on Marimorea, it is noteworthy that must be noted that - being entrusted to the Army responsible for the various principals command - the authorities of the Navy could not taking conflicting initiatives from those of the local Army commands except as to the ship that almost everything could be done promptly leave.

In general, according to the decision of Gen. Vecchiarelli to relinquish arms to the Germans in return for staff repatriation, the transfer was claimed and implemented in the various places with greater or lesser energy, according to the importance of the places, the relativity of the forces and the character of those who imitated the staff, German authority, and according to the degree of acquiescence of our garrison commands.

It is important to point out that Navy personnel were shown in all places firmness in refusing adherence to the Germans, with exceptionally negligible exceptions, even where - for interruption of communications - the directives subsequently issued by Marimorea could not be received .

It is superfluous to say that the repatriation promise made to the military, present in Greece, was not maintained and that they all ended up in prison camps, except for a few who managed to save themselves - often with the help of the Greek population - and to join in part to the bands of patriots.

Given these general considerations, it does not appear necessary to extend to the episodic particularities of each location, except for Argostoli (Kefalonia) and Corfu, where events of exceptional importance and complexity occurred.

On these facts we take from the German documentation the following synthetic appreciation (1):

"September 14, 1943. The Adm. Lange [Aegean Commander: abbreviated as "Aegeis"] communicates to Adm. Fricke

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(1) The document, which deals with events in Greece and the Aegean Islands as a result of armistice, is reproduced in Appendix II of Volume XVI, cited above.

[commander of the Naval Forces of the Southeast] that the serious situation in Corfu and Cephalonia requires concentration of means to act in western Greece. All available naval forces would be necessary for this purpose and for this reason other operations such as those against Lero should be postponed. This postponement offered a great risk because we needed to strengthen Lero's defense, also increased by the probable arrival of enemy forces before the Germans were able to intervene. That said, Adm. Lange would seek to obtain from the Army the approval of the priority to be given to action against the Ionian Islands ...

"September 23, 1943. Cephalonia falls into the hands of the Germans. In the fighting, about 400 Italians were killed and 5000 prisoners were killed. Gen. Gandin and all the officers. The attack order is issued to Corfu. The attack begins on the 24<sup>th</sup>, encountering a strong resistance that is broken; So from Corfu the 26<sup>th</sup> is in our hands. At the same time so are Andros and Naxos [in the Aegean]

*b) The tragic epic of Cephalonia [Kefalonia]. (Chart 8).*

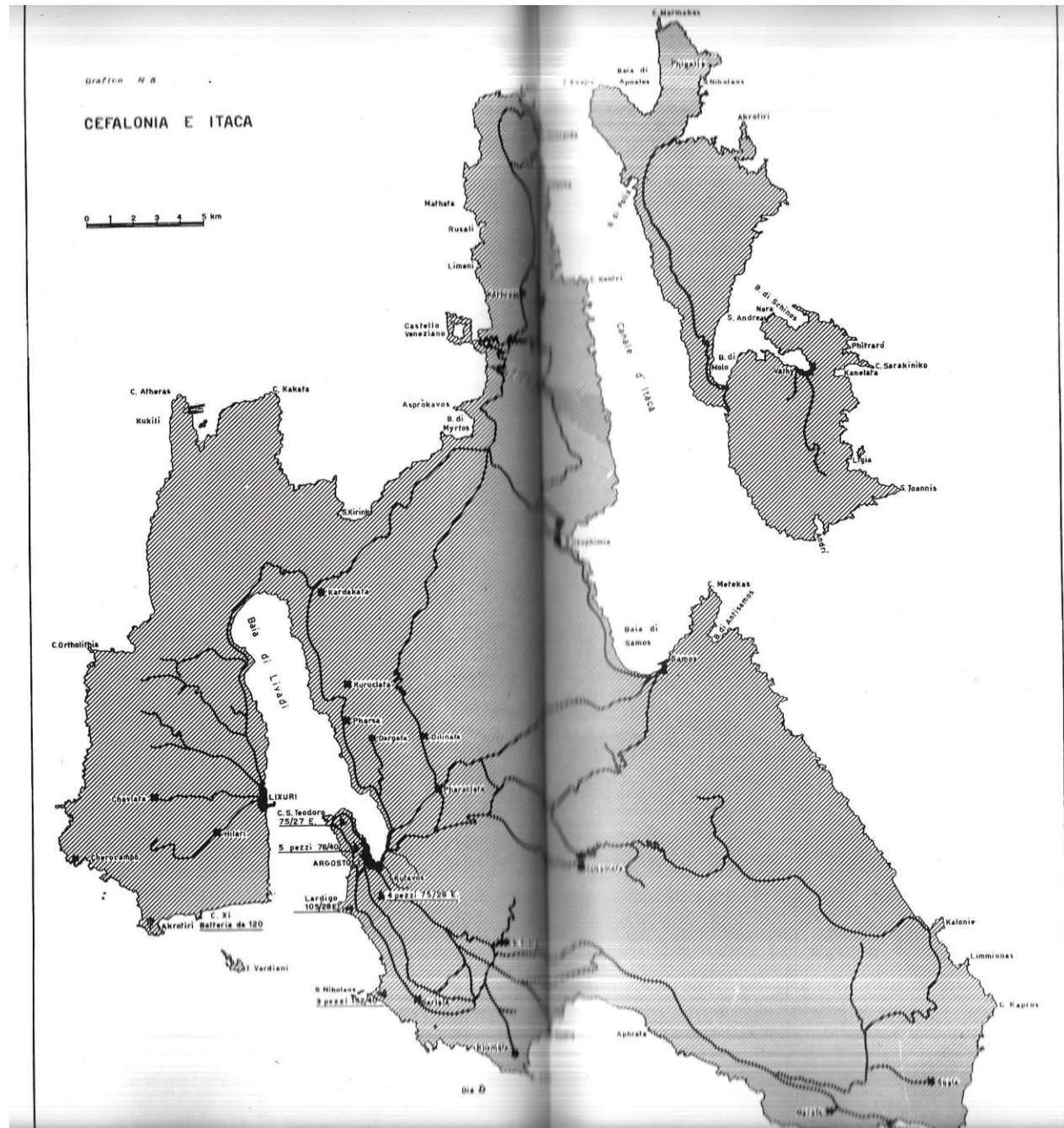
On this event, which is one of the blackest pages in the history of Nazi Germany, a lot of articles have been written, including in Greek newspapers, and four Italian books:

- "Cephalonia" by Giuseppe Moscardelli (Ed. Tipografia Regionale, Roma, 1945);
- " La tragedia di Cefalonia " by Triarius (Ed. Pinnarò, Roma, 1945);
- " L'eccidio di Cefalonia " by Don Romualdo Formato (Ed. Donatello De Luigi, Roma, 1946);
- "Cephalonia" of the Historical Office of the Army (Ed. Tipografia Regionale, Roma, 1947).

This is an episode that has sparked a sense of horror throughout the civilian world for the fierce cynicism with which - against the law of the peoples - the massacre of about 6,000 men, with nothing more than defending themselves with gunfire in obedience to the laws of military honor and the legitimate government's directives: an episode whose memory is incomparable in the memory of every Italian, such as that of the Fosse Ardeatine.

We therefore do not make a new description here, postponing the readers to the quoted books; We will limit ourselves to summarizing the participation

### Chart #8



in the operations carried out by the “Acqui” Division of the VIII Army Corps (Gen. Antonio Gandin, commander of the Division and of the island of Cefalonia [Kefalonia]) against the Germans, by personnel of the Navy, commanded by cap. freg. [Commander] Mario Mastrangelo.

It should be noted that the three Infantry Regiments of the Division, two were present in Cefalonia, while the third was presiding over Corfu and a battalion of one of the first two presiding over Zakynthos; But in Cephalonia there was also a battalion of black shirts [Militia]; artillery, engineers and service units were distributed in proportion.

In total, on September 8th, there were about 11,000 men in Cefalonia with 525 officers; The Germans had about 2,000 men and 75 officers, almost all located in the Lixuri peninsula, which, with influx of reinforcements from the nearby continent by sea and air, reached shortly a triple consistency, with 7 battalions (including 5 of alpine troops top quality) and, of a consistent force of modern artillery and other heavy weapons, that had been occupying positions of tactical importance. After the start of the hostilities, other reinforcements came, landing in the bays of Myrthos and Samos.

The Navy competed in the defense of Cefalonia with a three-piece battery of 152 and one of three 120 mounted to guard the entrance to the Livadia Bay, and five pieces of 76 A/A on a hilltop southwest of Argostoli.

There were several ships for the base services, a Mas and two sub hunters. All those who were in a position to take the sea were made by commander Mastrangelo to depart for Italy: among them the Mas and the two sub hunters at the command of the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Delfino who, as it was told, first headed for Saseno to get ready. Two seaplanes could also take off, reaching Taranto.

After four days of negotiations to reach a peaceful agreement with the Germans, according to the directives of Gen. Vecchiarelli to reach Gen. Gandin, during which by the general disposition of the general and a part of his employees to comply with the directives of Gen. Vecchiarelli came to firm determination, spread to all troops, to withstand any provocation, hostilities began on the morning of September 13 (1).

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(1) Among the most resolute ones who did not passively suffer German supremacy were the Cmdr. Mastrangelo and Col. Romagnoli, commander of divisional artillery. Determining the will to fight was the continuous coming of

to confirm the will to resist was shortly after midnight the news that Corfu's garrison would have resisted German claims and had already captured the German battalion located in the island (it was not a battalion but about 500 men of various services).

Around 06:00 of the 13<sup>th</sup> there appeared two German landing craft, loaded with soldiers at Point San Teodoro directed to Argostoli.

There was a fire against them by the Army and Navy batteries: it was not possible to determine which battery would start the first salvo, so the fire almost begins at the same time. The landing craft inverted the route, responding with the ship's weapons, and as soon as they entered the 152 battery of Minies shooting range, this also began to shoot.

One of the landing craft was sunk; The other, struck, raised a white flag and was then towed to Lixuri.

Meanwhile, fire was being carried out even against the German Command in Argostoli and against a German magazine in San Teodoro.

The incident did not cause the immediate expansion of the war operations, but a resumption of negotiations between Gen. Gandin and the Germans.

But the behavior of the latter, extremely treacherous, and the occurrence of other accidents, induced Gen. Gandin to break the negotiations and to present at midday on the 14<sup>th</sup> to an officer representing the German Command an ultimatum so conceived: "By the order of the Italian Supreme Command and by the will of the officers and the soldiers, the "Acqui" Division does not surrender the weapons. The German Superior Command, on the basis of this decision, it is requested to present a definitive answer by 09.00 tomorrow, September 15<sup>th</sup> (1).

This ultimatum (whose expiration was extended at a German request of five hours) was answered in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> with a large aerial demonstration without the launch of bombs, and in the afternoon Germanic reinforcements, representing a will of surprise, that General Gandin had unsuccessfully asked were suspended in exchange for promising to refrain by the Italian side from any hostile act.

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(1) The Supreme Command, following a message from the gen. Gandin sent in the night on September 12, informing him of the situation, he had said on the morning of 14 of resisting German demands.



of the 15<sup>th</sup> with two bombings of 24 aircraft on Argostoli (the first at 13:00 and the second at 18:00).

Hostilities were so open for German initiative. They lasted until 11:00 on September 22, when Gen. Gandin faced the overwhelming Germanic superiority, also due to the impressive support of Aviation to which the "Acqui Division") had nothing to oppose, induced itself to ask for the yield: this was granted without conditions. It is to be remembered that bombs and fires were falling together in the air strikes, fueling insidious promises and threatening the soldiers to cease fighting.

In that week of battle, the Navy distinguished itself by fighting ardor: we cite the salient episodes, in which the sailors took decisive action.

In the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the first two air strikes, the Germans had a convergent attack maneuver on Argostoli, moving from Kardakataal north and Lardigò to the south. They had managed to occupy Mount Telegraph, but were dislodged with bayonet attack an hour after sunset.

During the night the Germans attempted to restore the situation with a double landing: in the Lardigò area with 15 boats and at San Teodoro with two landing craft. The attempt was frustrated with the Navy's battery, in particular the 76 mm. that earned the praise of the divisional infantry commander. So the Germans, who were in the Argostoli peninsula, at 23:00 they had to ask for the surrender which was granted at 02:00 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The request was advanced through the Navy Command and as imposed unconditionally. It aroused 500 prisoners and 6 tanks of these; two were efficiently assigned to the Navy Command, which employed them to reinforce the defense of the 76 battery which had so distinguished, even capturing a dozen trucks.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the Navy batteries contrasted against the advancement of German reinforcements along the Lixuri - Kardakata road.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> Gen. Gandin radio-telegraphed to the Supreme Command, through Supermarina with which Navy Argostoli could still communicate, asking for relief: here are the texts, transmitted in clear language, the message and the answer:

"From Cephalonia to Supreme Command. - German occupation limited to Lixuri - Cape Munta stop Urge fighter intervention wishing to eliminate possible landing stop Gandin.

"From Supreme Command to Cephalonia. - Impossibility to send the required aid to inflict enemy more serious losses possible stop Every sacrifice will be rewarded stop Ambrosio »(1).

However, in the doubt of being able to communicate with the Supreme Command, Gen. Gandin had sent sten. vasc. c. [Navy Ensign] Vincenzo Di Rocco to Brindisi at the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> on a Red Cross steamer, of the minesweeping squadron, to deliver with his letter the situation and above all to solicit the intervention of air force. The expedition did not achieve the purpose, because Di Rocco, after reaching Gallipoli after a lucky sailing, could only appear at Brindisi on the 21<sup>st</sup> but informed Cephalonia of his arrival when the our bad fate was sealed.

The desired aerial aid was never directly given, even for the extreme shortage of aircraft still in the initial phase of reorganization in the south. However, the 18<sup>th</sup> 200 American bombers had indirectly supported the "Acqui" division, bombing Arokos airport a short distance from Patrasso: the news spread among our fighters on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> who had made a sense of relief, the action had the positive effect of producing a stop in the German offensive on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Commander Mastrangelo was taken to the hospital, who had long since been ill, had remained unmoving in his command and combat position. The 2<sup>nd</sup> in command cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Vittorio Barone took over command of the navy units, who learned of the order of surrender while he was at the 76 mm. battery.

He gathered the staff in the same place and executed the order of surrender; which specified that we should consider our fighters as prisoners of war.

But, as our units surrendered, the Germans immediately began the massacre of soldiers: who had already during the fighting had passed their weapons to the officers and NCOs

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(1) According to the testimony of radio sub-chief [a NCO] Francesco Mauro, on September 12<sup>th</sup> he - with the approval of the ten. art. [Lieutenant of Artillery] Seggiaro, Commander of the Navy 76 mm. battery, not far from the radio station, and cap. comm. [radio chief] Luigi Pozzi - made a telegram to the Command of the naval forces in Malta. He had the following answer: "Remember that the Germans have sunk the battleship *Roma*, so it is not necessary to deliver weapons to the Germans in any way without fighting." Mauro was among the survivors of the killing and, after captured, transferred the 20<sup>th</sup> October to the Athens concentration camp.

who fell into their hands. The horrors of the massacre are with moving evidence described in the books mentioned.

Officials were locked in the evening of 22 in a home in Argostoli, where General Gandin was first shot in the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> and shot in the garden of a Red House near San Teodoro. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the execution of the officers was completed in the same garden; In the evening commander Mastrangelo and Captain g.n. d.m. rich. [Naval Engineer (ret.)] Francesco Castellano, almost sixty, was shot soon after.

Thus is described the end of the valiant fighters of the "Acqui" division by the artillery captain Ermanno Bronzini of the Division Command, escaped from the slaughter, which was interrupted for the repeated interventions of the chaplain Padre Romualdo Formato, interventions that eventually succeeded in breaching in the soul of the Germans, while he asked for grace for all those who were still alive but not for himself; yet he was also spared (1):

"The officers of the III battalion of the 317<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the officers of the Command of the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and the officers of the VII Group of 105/28, immediately shot on the battlefield. Major Galli, the adjutant of the 317<sup>th</sup> infantry, did not want to surrender and committed suicide.

"The medical officers were similarly, also shot,

"In the night between September 24 and 25, two officers fled from the 37<sup>th</sup> field hospital. The Germans, on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, shot in retaliation seven officers there

...

"There were 525 officers of the "Acqui" on September 8. Of these, 37 escaped the "Red House" shooting [when the massacre ceased]. They also saved themselves - because doctors, chaplains, hospitalized - another 20 or 25 officers. Another twenty (maximum figure) managed to save themselves by taking refuge with Greek civilians. Thus, in total, there were saved 80 or 90 officers at the maximum. In view of the fact that 65 perished on the battlefield (including about 50 shot at their post) in operations between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, officers shot by the Germans between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25 September were about 370.

"The force of the non-commissioners and the troop was on September 8th on 11,000 men.

"The survivors were interned: in part went to Argostoli's judicial prisons, part to a barracks in the same city ...

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(1) The report of chap. Bronzini is among the documents of the Historical Office. Large excerpts of the report are reproduced in the book of Moscardelli,

"They were stripped of everything, deprived of their shoes kept as beasts, without any health care. Low rations: 25 grams of rice a day, a biscuit, a little dry vegetable.

"In mid-October, the Germans began to propose prisoners to join the army's auxiliary services. Those who were exhausted by hunger joined, and all the simple soldiers. But no more than 300 were those who stayed in Kefalonia for coastal fortification work. Everyone else was transported to the Greek continent ...

"Lieutenant Lorenzo Caccavale of the Navy, escaped from the shooting of September 24, was by the Germans in charge of loading and unloading at the port of Argostoli. At every departure, he reported the approximate number of men embarked. Up to 6,500 men are counted.

"So, I'm during the operations from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the shooting and likewise perished in Kefalonia about 6,000 soldiers.

"All units, who had called for the rendering, were unarmed, aligned, and machine-gunned.

"Neither the misfortunes of the "Acqui" Division end here.

"During the transport to the Greek continent, three ships, at a distance of a few days from one another, ended up in the mines and sunk with much of the human burden, crammed into the holds without pity.

"His estimate that are perceived, thus, about some 6,000 men, which would bring the total of losses from the "Acqui" to about 9,000 men on 11,000,

Of the Navy personnel had passed for the arms 10 Officers of 17, in addition to 9 out of 12 of the Army in service at the Navy, and 29 soldiers from C.R.E.M. for about 200.

The CREM Lieutenant Caccavale, in the role of nautical services, remained with Argostoli, along with other personnel, in charge of the port services provided by the Germans until the end of the German occupation of the island of Kefalonia, that is until September 10, 1944, when they were evicted due to the progressive occupation of Greece by the Allies. Even though he was working on the dependence of the Germans, he did a clandestine work of information keeping himself - not without risks - in contact with British secret agents..

To his great credit is a letter written to the Italian Authorities on 6 November 1944 by the Allied Military Commission, based in Argostoli:

"Shortly before the Germans left Kefalonia, a German unit had been ordered to destroy the docks and installations at the port of Argostoli.

"The lieutenant R.N. Caccavale Lorenzo, along with some valiant collaborators (81 military nominally named, 77 of the Navy and 4 of the Army) with their own sacrifice and altruism under the threat of Germanic weapons, cut the electrical connections of the explosive charges destined to destroy the port of Argostoli, which was saved. "

*c) The fight in Corfu and the end of the TB Sirtori and Stocco (Chart 9)*

Corfu was the seat of the Government of the Ionian Islands (Governor Piero Parini) and of the Military Command of the Island, entrusted to Colonel Lusignani of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the "Acqui" Division, cap. freg. c. [Commander] Nicola Ostuni held the Naval Command, is dependent on the aforesaid Army Command for territorial issues.

Also in Corfu, after July 25, 1943, the influx of German men and materials grew, which on September 8<sup>th</sup> were engaged in the installation of two 150 mm batteries and in the preparations for transporting reinforcements from Prevesa and from Gomenizza: the size of the German units was about 500 men.

The Italian garrison included about 4000 men and Col. Lusignani depended on the XXVI Army Corps (Gen. Della Bona) (1).

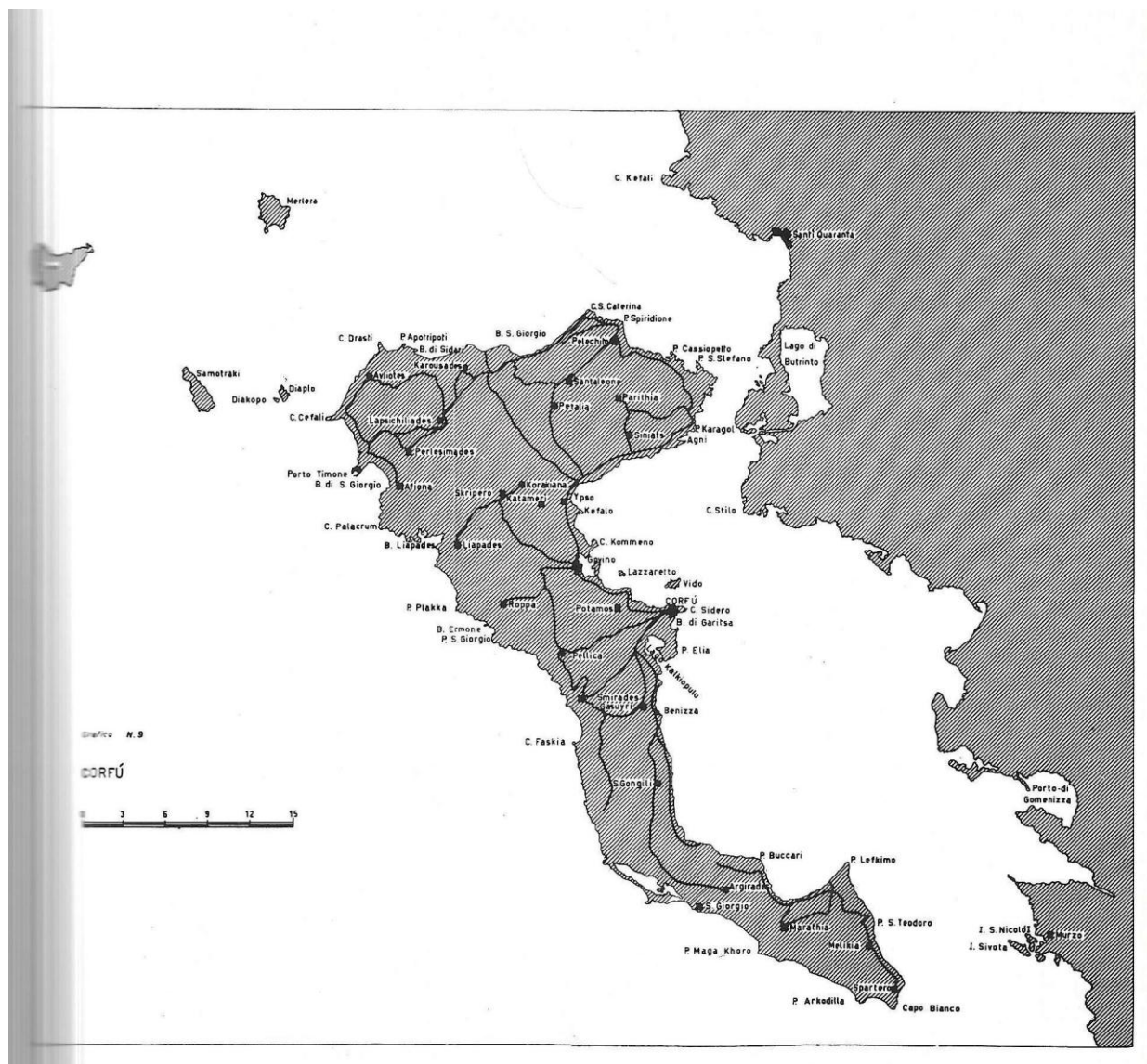
The Navy Command had a minesweeper flotilla (cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Aristide Lagorio) and various auxiliary ships; depending on the Navy Command, the two existing Port Offices were in Corfu and Gomenizza. The Navy had no batteries; Coastal defense and anti-aircraft defense were all of the Army, with very little consistency waiting to be strengthened by German batteries.

At the proclamation of the armistice, the communications with Italy and Greek territory of were interrupted, with the exception of those with Gomenizza.

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(1) Note that while the Second Division was dependent on the VIII Corps (Gen. Marghinotti), the regiment detached in Corfu depended on the XXVI, although it did not cease to be part of the "Acqui": separation of the dependency on two Army Corps had been implemented for territorial reasons on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Chart #9



On September 8<sup>th</sup>, Governor Parini had ceded all the powers to military commander and for a few days, he was ready to repatriate with the civilian employees of the Governorate as soon as the Civil Administration's delivery practices were completed.

The official news of the armistice has arrived and subsequent instructions, the sending to Italy of naval ships unneeded for defense and all transportable materials, including fuels, was sent to Italy (to Brindisi). Various minesweepers departed; the tanker *Oberdan*, loaded with oil; the motorship *Ida 2*, loaded with gasoline; The tanker *Sesia* with the motovedetta [picket] *Spanedda*; other boats; all loaded. Departures continued until the 11<sup>th</sup>. From Gomenizza were sent the minesweeper boat *Angela* and a Greek motorboat, which was then captured.

On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the former governor Parini left Corfu, with officers on board the steamer *Cervo*, from which he landed at Fano on September 14, ordering the commander to continue to Venice; The *Cervo* arrived on the 18<sup>th</sup>, after taking a short break in Losinj (1).

Between the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>, negotiations were held between representatives of the Command of the German Edelweiss Division (from which depended on the German personnel detached on Corfu) and the Italian Command. Col. Lusignani showed himself very firmly towards the Germans from the beginning and on the afternoon of the 12th declared to their parliamentarians that he would comply with the provisions of the Government (which in the meantime had, as seen, ordered all to consider the Germans as enemies), defending the island at all cost in the event of an attack, but assuring that the German military would protect and take over the island. He would justify this line of conduct, finally adopted, declaring "not to be able to follow the order of Gen. Vecchiarelli to peacefully hand over the weapons, because this being a former prisoner was not of his free will."

At 06:45 on the 13<sup>th</sup>, three German bombers surprise attacked the city and the port of Corfu, while the batteries deployed in Melichia area fired on some points on the island. With this German attack was legitimate the immediate use of the

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(1) The *Cervo* was a Yugoslav steamer, a prize of war: a commander and crew were militarized Slavic origin, being Italian citizens. The steamer wrecked before Grado as he moved from Trieste to Venice on November 9, 1944, in the service of the Naval command of Salò.

strength of the Italian garrison, the German soldiers who were present, in number - as we have said - of about 500.

Meanwhile (as we have seen about Santi Quaranta), Corfu's departure of the garrison had begun and continued. With three trips, using all available means, some 4,000 men were transferred, a part of which were military stragglers who flocked to Santi Quaranta from the inside. Means sent from Brindisi also contributed to the eviction, which had continued for Puglia, passing through Corfu. Even the few personnel of the Navy who was at Gomenizza had arrived at Corfu on the 10<sup>th</sup> with the trawler *Angelo*, with the lieutenant of the port Luigi Chilò replacing the port captain of Corfu Giuseppe Campo, repatriated on the 11<sup>th</sup> for sickness on one of the steamers departing for Italy with other soldiers and sick civilians.

On the evening of 13<sup>th</sup>, the air bombardment was repeated with more aircraft, four of which were downed.

Shortly after the airstrike came the two TBs *Sirtori* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Alessandro Senzi, embarked at the time of departure from Brindisi in the place of the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Carlo Pulcini, sick) and *Stacco* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Renato Lupi), sent by Italy at the request of the island's Command to assist with their weapons in the defense of Corfu.

Towards 09:00 in the morning of 14<sup>th</sup>, while the last installment of the troops from Santi Fortanta was still underway, a mixed formation of Stukas and Junker 88 attacked the city and harbor dropping numerous explosive and incendiary bombs. Three Stukas aimed at the two torpedo boats, who were anchored to 150 meters from each other, centering on the *Sirtori* that was hit by a bomb, which exploded under the hull after passing through it, while another five exploded so close as to cause numerous flaws. The torpedo boats, heavily damaged, was towed to the beach south of the Lazzaretto island. The *Stacco* was sent away by the Navy Command and crossing south of the island until the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> when, at the limit of autonomy, ordered to return to Navy Brindisi that base to be used for the escort of convoys between Santi Quaranta and Brindisi.

In the afternoon of the same day, several other air strikes were repeated, and the fire of the 150 mm. battery from the epirota shore was added; The 15<sup>th</sup> other attacks were repeated.



On the 15<sup>th</sup>, an attempt at German landing at Benizza, carried out with about fifteen motor boats and landing craft, was rejected by Army batteries. On the evening of the same day, Commander Senzi, in agreement with Commander Ostuni, decided to use *Sirtori's* crew in the land battle, save a small number of men detained to try to refloat ship. The staff, organized in a unit at the command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Luigi Salto, was dispatched to the northern part of the island, but did not have the opportunity to fight.

From 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, the air bombings of the city and of the island went up by intensity and frequency. During the bombing of the 18<sup>th</sup>, the small steamer *Tergeste* and the tug boat *Fiume* sank in the port of Corfu. Meanwhile, the Navy Command and detachment of the sailors had been transferred on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> out of Corfu following the Command headquarters and Barracks being made unusable, caused by bombs.

The 19<sup>th</sup> arrived from Brindisi the Ms. 33 with the supply of medicines, and also Mn. *Probitas* and the TB *Clio* and *Sirio*, which were started to Santi Fortanta to embark another 1750 soldiers, who the same day - embarked on the three ships - were taken to Brindisi.

The 21<sup>st</sup> the TB *Sagittarius* brought his contribution to the anti-aircraft defense against invasion, sent by Brindisi (where he had just arrived from Taranto with *Aretusa*) at the request of the British authorities.

The night between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> - when the efficiency of the defenses had been greatly compromised by the aerial action - German landing forces landed. At San Giorgio, conquering the capital of Argirades and continuing along the eastern coast, along which on the 24<sup>th</sup> they advanced to the north reinforced by other landing units on that side, finally, with the support of massive air strikes, cutting off part of the Italian forces deployed in the southern part of the island.

Consequently, the resistance of the garrison was decreasing with a sharp reduction in the probability of halting the enemies advance to the city of Corfu.

The military command immediately informed Italy of the precariousness of the situation. Then, TB *Stacco*, who was escorting with Cov.*Slbilla*, a convoy (steamers *Probitas* and *Dubac*, motorship *Salvare*) directed to Santi Fortanta, received orders from Supermarina to leave the convoy and to direct at the maximum speed to the San Giorgio area to counter the landing, staying for about

an hour. The torpedo boat arrived when the landing was over for several hours, and after an hour of vain search for the landing means (which had passed to the east of the island), he headed for the convoy; He did not intercept a communication from Navy Corfu informing her of new landings on the other side of the island.

Along the route to reach the convoy, the TB *Stocco* was repeatedly attacked between 16:20 and 17:15 and was eventually sunk by a massive 12 Stuka attack, with almost total loss of the crew, even by aerial strafing the shipwrecked and bad weather that occurred in the night. The torpedo boat sunk around 19:20 on September 24<sup>th</sup>. In this mission ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Mario Trisolini commanded the *Stocco*, who had replaced ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Lupi.

On September 25, the situation of Corfu defenders became unsustainable. In the morning Col. Lusignani, despite having lost the southern part of the island, still had some hope of continuing to resist exploiting the northern mountain sector. But now they were short of ammunition, especially anti-aircraft. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the events came to an end, and at 16:00 the Italian resistance had virtually ceased: in the evening a white flag was raised on the Old Fortress of the city (it was not possible to ascertain whether by order of Col. Lusignani or if Initiative of a subordinate officer).

*Corfu fell by the almost exclusive effect of aerial action*, which we could not oppose, despite the repeated calls of Colonel Lusignani to obtain the assistance of the air force that unfortunately our Supreme Command did not have.

Colonel Lusignani was shot shortly after surrender. Instead, Commander Ostuni, with his naval staff, could leave the island after destroying *Sirtori's* hull, with the last boats remaining efficient, landing in Otranto on September 27. Even the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Senzi, after destroying the hull of his torpedo boat, repatriated with the men who remained with him.

All navy personnel, who had been detained in the Army units to help counteract enemy operations, or which, however, had been isolated since the rapid advance of Germany to the city of Corfu, fell prisoner of the Germans: some - as in all the places in Greece - could save themselves with the aid of the population which, as has already been noted,

had harbored our soldiers, despite everything, sympathy, as they could not bear the Germans.

*d) Territories dependent on the Command of Eastern Greece (Marisudest Athens).*

Marisudest was a Naval Command: North Aegean Naval Command, held on September 8, 1943 by capitano di fregata [Commander] Umberto Del Grande acting as a vessel captain. From him, also depended on the existing logistical and technical services for the needs of the ships, at Piraeus, Suda, Heraklion (Crete) and Mudros on the island of Lemmo.

The Navy Commands of Piraeus, of Chania [La Canea] (Suda and Heraklion) and for Mudros actually had liaison offices with the German Aegean naval authorities and as such were considered, with the abbreviated name of Maricolleg. Furthermore, Marisudest, for the sole disciplinary part, is responsible for the Middle East Recruitment Office, resident in Athens and headed by Major of Naval Engineers Guglielmo Giani.

The Marisudest commander was also the chief of the Italian naval command of the Aegean (Aegeis), based in Athens, according to the orders of which the Italian units were employed.

After 25 July, an infiltration of German officers and personnel was made at Marisudest and Maricolleg, with the pretext of improving cooperation, but with the aim - clearly revealed at the armistice - of having readymade Commands to be replaced the Italians .

On the 8th of September, there were the destroyers *Crispi* and *Turbine* in Piraeus (employees of Mariegeo Rhodes and arrived at Lero on the 6<sup>th</sup> by escorting a German steamer), TBs *San Martino* and *Calatafimi*, the Aux Cr. *Morosini*, 1 motosilurante [MTB], 8 motovelieri [motorized sailing vessels] and 3 motovedette [patrol boats] of the anti-submarine group, 8 auxiliary minesweepers, 3 subsidiary ships, 6 merchant ships. In Iraklion there were 4 motorboats of the same anti-submarine group, the TBs *Solferino* and *Castelfidardo* were at Suda. 1 motosilurante [MTB] and two steamers, as well as some German motosiluranti [MTB]; st La Canea 2 motosiluranti [MTB]; at Heraklion 2 anti-submarine ships.

Since the communications center was exercised by the Germans, it was Adm. Lombardi who warned Commander Del Grande of the Armistice on the evening of 8 September, doubting that

the Germans would tell him, asking him to inform Gen. Vecchiarelli.

This officially confirmed to Commander Del Grande the news at 20:30 accompanying him with the disposition that came from Rome that “in the case of hostility by German the ships in navigation, had to reach a port in southern Italy and those damaged had to be sunk.”

Marisudest instantly ordered all the ships to prepare the engines for motion, but kept ready to scuttle; it was not possible for him to communicate this order to Chania [La Canea] and Mudros. Then Commander Del Grande met the top officers of Marisudest in the war council (cap. freg. [Commander] Calda, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command, cap. freg. [Commander] Lanfranchi Chief Operation Officer, Major Giani): It was recognized that "the late communication of the armistice did not allow us to take a surprise to transfer our ships to an Italian port and that their exit from Piraeus could only take place by means of an act of strength supported by the troops on the ground, being the port was in the hands of the Germans." Major Giani was charged with the scuttling operation.

Meanwhile, Gen. Vecchiarelli had entered into negotiations with the Germanic Command of Greece, arriving in the early hours of 9 September to those mentioned conclusions of renouncing any resistance, speaking for Marimorea [Naval Command Greece], a resistance that would be resolved in unnecessary bloodshed, given the net inferiority of armament of our troops. In keeping with these conclusions, Gen. Vecchiarelli had ordered to suspend ship departures.

During the night from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> a delegate of the Aegeis Command (Adm. Lange) had gone to Maricolleg Piraeus and aboard each ship to threaten the use of force in the case of attempts to leave the port, whose entrance was - mined and barred; meanwhile, with large movements of armed troops, Piraeus had been completely surrounded.

Towards 02:00 in the 9<sup>th</sup>, after two meetings with the Adm. Lange, Commander Del Grande - who had refused to accept the request for ship's surrender - was ordered to prevent sabotage and to stand alongside Germany. Of these encounters, Commander Del Grande had been informed by Gen. Vecchiarelli and at last received a written order from him on the definitive attitude he was facing by the Germanic naval authorities: order that

to surrender the military ships in harmony with the agreement of the ceding of all weapons by the Italian armed forces in Greece.

Commander Del Grande was then concerned about destroying the secret archives and making the transfer in the least humiliating way for the Navy and the personnel embarked on them, the transfer being made by 12 noon on the same day of the 9<sup>th</sup>.

The agreed ceding arrangements were:

- delivery of each ship between its commander and an officer on board, and not directly between the commander and the Germans;
- prohibition of acts of sabotage;
- landing of the crew, Italian with individual weapons;
- lowered by the flag after the landing of the crew.

As for merchant ships moored in a harbor area other than that of military ships, Major Giani - in charge of proceeding to their sinking - had reached them before the deal was entered into and had time to sink three (motorships *Arezzo*, *Vesta*, *Ascianghi*): at the German protests, Commander Del Grande was able to say that he had not time to give the counter order.

During the ceding operation and sinking operation the officers and crews were dignified and disciplined.

At 12:00 the radio station of Marisudest was closed, whose staff "had already been guarded since the night along with that of station.

In the following days, departures for the prison camps of land-based sailors and merchant crews began under the false promise of repatriation: even in Athens and Piraeus, many succeeded in eclipsing - by distrusting the good faith of Germany - by taking refuge with Greek families or trying to join the Partisans.

Commander Del Grande was arrested on 19 September, after 10 days spent on the moral and material assistance of the staff, despite the German pressures for adhesion almost all remained true to the legitimate Government. At the same time was also arrested Gen. Vecchiarelli and Gen. Gandini, his chief of staff.

The Piraeus were at first the crews of the warships that the Germans wanted to hold; But on October 14th it was agreed that there would remain some seventy specialists for

to train Germanic personnel on the operation of the ships. Were arrested Commander Del Grande, Commander Calda, Major Giani, three other officers, and some twenty men remaining of Navy Piraeus.

The 14<sup>th</sup> came from Crete the crews of TB *Solferino* and *Castelfidardo*, captured by the Germans in Suda on 9 September and transferred to Piraeus on the 19<sup>th</sup> with German crews.

On 1 October, Commander Calda and Major Giani, were arrested, tried in November, were sentenced to four weeks of close arrest, though considered already served. Among the remaining specialists, a new intense German propaganda was made, with negative results, though supported by four officers, among whom capitano di fregata [Commander] Luigi Pilosio (speaking briefly) passed to the Germans.

A nod is deserving of the events in the islands of Crete and Lemnos.

In these two islands, the position of our Commands (Maricolleg) was entirely specific because those islands were in full occupation in Germany and therefore the representatives of the Italian Navy were at the total operational dependence of the Seekommandant commanders and with Marisudest had merely a disciplinary subordination and liaison functions with the Germans.

Head of Maricolleg Chania [La Canea] was cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Domenico Da Novi, while in the eastern part of Crete there was a group of four Italian batteries (installed during the time of the island's capture under the command of cap. freg. [Commander] Luigi Pilosio, headquartered in San Nicola, under the direct dependence of the Seekommandant of the island). Head of Maricolleg Mudros (Lemnos) was cap. corv. c. [Lt. Commander] Giannetto Montarsolo.

The fact that in the two islands the command was held by the German authorities greatly facilitated the action they had taken, immediately after the announcement of the armistice, to take possession of naval units and services, surprising Italian personnel before implementing the orders immediately issued by Commander Da Novi ..

These, intercepted the communications of the armistice, had transmitted to Seekommandant that by showing to ignore it, he said that it might be enemy propaganda. He, however, went on the motor torpedo boats moored at Chania [La Canea] and on the torpedo boats moored

at Suda, ordering immediate preparations for the departure and possible sabotage.

Returning to Chania [La Canea], he conferred with the Seekommandant, who placed the usual alternative to join them for all the ships or to cede them with the landing of the crews.

As the conversation took place, the Germans proceeded to occupy the ships, and he was deliberately kept under surveillance to prevent him from communicating with anyone until he was released at 04:10 of the 9<sup>th</sup> - he noted that torpedo boats, motor torpedo boats and some lesser ships present were in possession of the Germans, who were landing Italian officers and crews.

He managed to set fire to the radio station at 06:30, while a German officer came up with a platoon to take possession of the Maricolleg headquarters and the radio station as a result, Commander Da Novi was arrested with death threats, but was released shortly afterwards by the Seekommandant, before which it had been translated. He was sent to Piraeus on 16 September and the 19<sup>th</sup> was taken to a prison in Germany.

In Heraklion, where the services were entrusted to a detachment commanded by a naval lieutenant, things took place as in Chania [La Canea] and Suda: in fact, in Heraklion the Germanic surprise action was facilitated by the fact that the Germans knew of the armistice before the Italians.

As for the battery group dependent on cap. freg. [Commander] Pilosio, their takeover by German was facilitated by the presence in the batteries of Germanic personnel, who were part of the gun's crews.

The ceding of the batteries was completed, in harmony with orders issued by the Command of the "Siena" Division in Crete (in the absence of orders from Marisudest, with which it was not possible to communicate) by the 12<sup>th</sup>.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the batteries were embarked by the Germans and moved to Piraeus to be transferred to Germany, not without the escape of men who preferred to go into hiding in Greek territory. Cap. freg. [Commander] Pilosio declared for the Germans after he arrived at Piraeus.

In Lemnos the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Montarsolo had only a dozen people at his command, mostly involved with the radio station. The Germans, numerous and well-armed, had no difficulty in claiming and obtaining the surrender of the few Italian sailors, who with their commander were expelled to Thessaloniki on 23 September.

*e) The final fate of the ships.*

The six torpedoes present in the Marisudest jurisdiction were employed with German crews.

The DD *Crispi*, renamed T.A. 15, went down at Piraeus during an allied aerial attack on October 12, 1944.

The DD *Turbine*, called T.A. 14, had similar ends at Salamina on September 15, 1944.

The TB *Calatafimi*, with the renamed T.A. 19, was sunk in all probability off Samos on August 9, 1944,

The TB *San Martino*, under the name of T.A. 17, would have been damaged in the Piraeus port during the aforementioned aerial attack of October 12, 1944 and subsequently sunk in the same port.

TB *Solferino*, who became T.A. 18, sank into the waters of Volo on October 19, 1944 in a fight with the British destroyers *Termagant* and *Tuscan*,

The TB *Castelfidardo*, called T.A. 16, would sank at Iraklion after the explosion of a steamship that had been moored next to it.

The four Motor torpedo boats (Ms. 42 at Piraeus, Ms. 43, 44, 46 at Chania [La Canea] and Suda) would sunk at Thessaloniki [Salonicco] for imprecise reasons and on unspecified dates.

## 26<sup>th</sup> EVENTS IN THE BASES OF PUGLIA.

Puglia was the region of Italy, which was first under the control of the legitimate Government, settled in Brindisi - as it has been seen - in the afternoon of 10 September.

With the arrival at Taranto of the British Airborne Division of the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army, on September 9, the Italian-English collaboration began: the few German forces in the Puglia region were rejected northwards, so that on September 12 Bari was occupied by the Allies and Foggia on September 28. On September 27, the constitution of the 1st Italian motorized group began, which on April 10, 1944 assumed, after being further strengthened, the denomination of "Italian Liberation Coprs" (C.I.L.), in which was inserted the "San Marco" Regiment, which was also reconstructed in Puglia by the Navy.

In the light of this summary picture of the initial military situation in that area, from which he began the cobelligerance of



a portion of the Armed Forces that was united and rearmed, we see how the events of the Navy's direct interest took place.

*a) Taranto.*

On September 8, 1943, the Commander in Chief of the Department of the Ionian and Lower Adriatic Sea was Adm sq. [Vice Adm.] Bruto Brivonesi and the Maritime Military Commander from 1 September was Adm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Giuseppe Fioravanzo. The latter should have entered into full function, with the responsibilities and dependencies arising from the new criteria for the defense of the maritime borders set by the Supreme Command and set out in paragraph 17 by 15 September, after having completed the procedures relating to the delivery steps both from the Command in Chief and from the Command of the Base (amm. Div. rich. [Rear Adm. (res)] Guido Calleri di Sala).

According to these criteria, the division of responsibilities between the Command in Chief of Department and the Maritime Military Command was defined as such.

The Command in Chief of the Department had under their jurisdiction:

- the direction of naval operations (with the forces assigned to the Department) in the basin of jurisdiction;

- the organization and defense of maritime traffic in the basin of jurisdiction;

- administrative and disciplinary control of all dependent commands.

At the Maritime Military Command had under their jurisdiction:

- the defense and services of the Naval Base, with a ground front entrusted to Army troops by the Maritime Military Command staff;

- the maintenance of public order throughout the province of Taranto.

After the Allies landing, which will be mentioned shortly, on the Maritime Military Command other tasks were burdened:

- full control of the railways, coaches [Bus], postal services, telegraphs, telephones, censorship, etc. of Puglia and Lucania;

- the contribution to the civilian life of the province with the aid of every kind, among which the granting of means of transport became essential;

- Relationships with Allied Authorities, which continue to require media, personnel, services and requisition of local

and goods have interfered in all civil and military activities in the Taranto area.

In carrying out its activities, the Maritime Military Command depended:

- by the Head of the Department for the Services of the Base and for administrative and disciplinary matters;
- by the Command of the IX Army Corps (Gen. Lerici, based in Bari) for public order and civil matters;
- by the Command of the LI Army Corps set up on September 15 (Gen De Stefanis, headquartered in Lecce) for territorial defense.

The Commands and Bodies located within the jurisdiction of the Department therefore had the following dependencies:

From the Commander in Chief they were directly within the limits of the jurisdiction for which it was established:

- Maritime Military Commands of Taranto and of Brindisi; The Navy Commands of Bari, Otranto, Gallipolis and Crotona, the Superior Commands of the ports and the military services entrusted to the port captains, in the places where there were no Maritime Military Commands or Navy Commands;
- the departments of the Services concerned with the territory of jurisdiction (Marisan [Health], Maricommi [Communications] and Marigenimil [Military Engineers]);
- Military Navy and assigned requirement;
- Maritime Reconnaissance Aviation;
- the Anti-submarine Group;
- the Territorial Military War Tribunal;
- the telecommunications and traffic lights service.

Under the command of the Maritime Military of Taranto and of Brindisi were placed:

- Base Services: Arsenal (Taranto only), Workshops, Material Deposits, Military and Merchant Ports, Supplies;
- coastal defense and anti-aircraft defense commands;
- the Maritime Defense Command, including obstructions, barriers, pilotage, etc .;
- Naval units assigned to the Base (dredging units, for the protection of the passages and barriers, for local services);
- the units of any armed forces assigned to the Maritime Military Command (For the defense of the base on the seafront and on the ground, for security and internal security, for various services);
- requisitions, both naval and real estate;

- military police service and telephone control and censorship.

After arriving in Puglia of the Allies, Brindisi also had

- to a lesser extent - that extension of activity cited for the Maritime Military of Taranto.

It must be said at once that Allied Authorities were settled in Taranto:

- F.O.L.I. (Flag Officer Liaison Italy), with rank comparable to that of the Commander in Chief of the Department; He represented the Allied Navy at our Navy;
- F.O.T.A.L.I. (Flag Officer Taranto Area Liaison Italy), similar to the Commander Military Maritime; Supervised all the services set up by the Allies in Taranto and was dependent on it the three following Authorities:

- N.O.L.C. (Naval Officer in Charge), similar to the commander of the Base and Ports;

- Captain Superintendent, with supervising work and arsenal services (he was a colonel of the British Naval Engineers);

- Commander of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Base;

- The 8<sup>th</sup> Army Quartermaster (transferred to Bari at the end of September 1943);

- Commander 52<sup>nd</sup> Area (it was the Base Command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, whose supplies of men and materials came to Taranto);

- Representative of A.C.C. (Allied Control Commission) for civil affairs.

The first five were emanations of the Allied Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Navy; The sixth and seventh of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army's Command, the latter being depended on by the Allied Representative at the Italian Government.

Naturally, each Authority had all the necessary organs to carry out its tasks (1).

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(1) In the other naval bases or ports, Allied Commanders and Offices have been established, of greater or lesser importance and more or less numerous depending on the importance of the Base or Port. So only Naples had an F.O.W.I.T: (Flag Officer Western Italy Transport) in the person of an English Admiral and a Command of the Disembarkation Base of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army. In the other locations there was a N.E.I.C. and an A.E.C. representative, with its subordinate offices varying in function of local needs.

At the time when the announcement of the armistice was received by Marshal Badoglio, Military Maritime Commander was getting acquainted with the organization of the Base, in conversation with the assigning commander (Adm. Calleri, cited above). The Commander in Chief was coming back from the Rome meeting and came about an hour later.

The Adm. Fioravanzo said immediately to the Adm. Calleri, who, in the face of the new sudden situation, considered the orders to be final and assumed no other responsibility.

There were in Taranto 250 German soldiers, 2 German motor torpedo boats and a landing craft. Both asked to leave (the first to meet in Ginosa with paratroopers present there, the second to go to Greece): this was immediately granted by Adm. Brivonesi, so that on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> no Germanic element was more in Taranto (1).

At 21:36 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Adm. Brivonesi handed over to the commands he had been involved in a communication in which he recalled that the armistice did not affect the continuity of the Armed Forces tasks, inviting everyone to be vigilant and ready for each event, ordering commanders to illustrate these needs to the staff; two hours later he issues orders for the departure of the warships and merchant ships.

At 10:15 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Supermarina's order came applying the Public Order Memorandum no. 1; As there were no more German elements in Taranto, no measures had to be taken.

At 13:30 was delivered to the Command in Chief by an Air Force officer coming from Pescara, the following order of Gen. Ambrosio who was addressed to the Command of the IX Army Corps and to the Military Maritime Command of Taranto: "Make sure that starting from 13:00 today, September 9, pilots are 12 miles to 206 degrees from Faro San Vito [the Taranto lighthouse] to guide British naval formation that has to land Taranto to support our troops. Coastal batteries do not say do not open fire. "

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(1) The group formed by the two motor torpedo boats and the landing craft encountered at 14:30 the *Scipione*, which was on the way to Pescara. At the appearance of the cruiser, the motor torpedo boats embarked the crew of the landing craft and moved away at high speed making smoke. The landing craft exploded a few minutes later, obviously for a bomb exploding or a timed charge left on board by the crew. The motor torpedo boats had a few hours before sunk near Gallipoli two minesweeping trawlers.

Towards 14:00, the following message was received from the English admiral embarked on the BB *Howe*:

"The English Vice Admiral who represents the Commander in Chief of the Navy in the Mediterranean arrives in Taranto with the goal of ensuring that the terms of the armistice are observed *stop* The Vice Admiral requires first that six highly qualified pilots are sent to the British ships when these will be in the waters of Taranto *semi-stop* these pilots will in any case be allowed to return to Taranto after piloting the ships off the port *stop* The English vice-admiral also requires that 6 tugboats and 12 pontoon barges with complete crews are immediately sent alongside HMS *Howe* signed the Vice Admiral *stop Howe*"

Adm. Brivonesi replied:

"Urgent for English Vice Admiral on *Howe stop* It will be done to meet any needs outlined within the limits of the available means. Four qualified pilots and five tugs and various landing gear will be sent alongside the *Howe*".

It was immediately taken over by the Maritime Military Command on the order of Maridipart and at about 15:00 saw the *Howe* and six cruisers, surrounded by destroyers and other minor ships.

Shortly after 17:00, the Command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army, through the Command of the IX Army Corps, sent a message to all the Armed Forces and Navy Commands in Puglia, containing the directives on the behavior to be observed: not to oppose Anglo - Americans landings; Keep all the units ready for use; Not to induce hostile acts on the part of the Germans, but to react if they do.

At 17:30 British ships started to enter Mar Grande; the *Howe* finally came in at 18:20.

At 18:00, the sky of the Base was very low, coming from the west, some Messerschmidt aircraft pushing against British ships. The base Batteries and the naval batteries of the islands of San Pietro and San Paolo (closing the Mar Grande from the Gulf side) opened fire on Germanic aircraft, imitated immediately by British ships.

Meanwhile, having been informed that German troops had approached with an unclear attitude to the "Toscano" battery (near Navy Ginosa at the far west of the perimeter of Base), the Ms. 31 (sten. vasc. [Ensign] C. Antonio Scialdone) it was immediately sent to watch the area while

the reinforcement of the "Toscano" garrison was sent by tugboat *Tarantola* and Mz. 758 escorted by Cov. *Flora* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Giorgio Volpe) and Ms. 53 (sten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Mario Manusardi) a company of the San Vito battalion: but there was no reaction from the Germans, who then moved away. The escorting ships had remained in place to support with their weapons with any ground action.

The British naval force had departed from Malta at 23:00 on September 8, under the command of the Vice Adm. Power - commander of Malta Base - who had taken the liaison officer cap. vasc. [Captain] Ernesto Giuriati with him, with the Command in Chief Allied Navy of the Mediterranean (see paragraph 2) in his report that towards the Italian Navy "from everyone, and despite the incomplete knowledge of our actual situation and some erroneous impression due above all to British propaganda, the general sentiment was of esteem and appreciation for the work carried out."

The formation consisted of the BBs *Howe* and *King George*, six cruisers (five British with one, the *Abdiel* a minelayer) and one American [*Boise*] carrying the commander of the troops embarked on the cruisers [Gen. Hopkinson]), six destroyers and smaller ships.

When the formation was in view of Taranto and was already on the entry security route, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division went out to go to Malta (see paragraph 6). The BB *King George* then left the formation to follow our ships at a distance.

At 22:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> Adm. Fioravanzo was summoned to the *Boise* to confer with Gen. Hopkinson, He went on the cruiser, who was alongside a pier of the merchant harbor, along with Gen. Brigand Aroldo Lombardi (commander of the coastal troops in Taranto Base). In the three-hour interview, we agreed on how to unload the troops in the morning, the aid and the operational contribution that we could give, the ceding of premises for the first Navy Command and Service facility and the British navy where a representative was present), etc. They also provided the English with all the information they had on the Italian and German forces in Puglia and Lucania (1) on

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(1) In Taranto Base: naval defense 5 pieces of great caliber, 20 of medium caliber, 43 of small caliber anti-aircraft, anti-aircraft defense of 138 pieces and 290 machine guns with a total of 250 officers and 8,000 men; 8 battalions and 5 coastal companies;

the mood of the population and its political orientation, assuring the English that no harassment from the "Fascist Spirit" would have been brought to them: on this point the English asked the personal guarantee of Adm. Fioravanzo, who had no hesitation to give it. He also assured them that although he had not yet had any directive, "having German planes sunk in the afternoon the *Roma*, he interpreted the order of reacting only if he was attacked in the sense of considering it as nothing more than antagonistic Germans wherever they were and in any case". On the other hand, the early intervention of anti-aircraft batteries against German aircraft flying over British ships in the afternoon had favorably impressed the allied commanders.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 10:00, a second meeting was held, to which the Adm. Fioravanzo also made Gen. Coronato commander of the "Piceno" Division, in order to realize in particular the possible intervention of the Division to cover the left flank of British troops in their advanced north, alongside that it could have been threatened by German forces withdrawn from Calabria.

As the first interview took place, that is, at about 22:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, there was a loud explosion. The *Abdiel*, which had anchored almost on the channel entry line between the Mar Grande and the Mar Piccolo, about 700 meters from the canal, blew up. The hospital ship *Marechiaro* (used to rescue shipwrecks in departmental waters) was immediately sent to rescue the survivors and relocate them to the ground for first care.

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12 anti-parachute units: 2 heavy machine-gun companies, 3 mobile machine-gun platoons, 1 flame thrower tank company, 12 howitzers from 149, 1 47 mm anti-tank gun company, 2 20 mm. anti-tank rifle companies, 40 mortars, 7 workers companies, carabinieri units and finance guard: altogether about 12,000 men. Anti-ship and anti-aircraft batteries that could also fire on the extended ground front for about 70 kilometers. In Puglia and Lucania there were some Divisions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army, of which the "*Piceno*" and "*Legnano*" were assigned to the mobile defense of the city of Taranto, under the dependence of the same Adm. Fioravanzo, who was senior to the two generals who commanded them. As for the German forces, there were 250 men in Taranto, who had already left for Ginosa; 200 men in Brindisi; some thousands of men of various arms and specialties scattered in Puglia and Lucania (in the existing documentation no clarification was found in this regard, but it is presumable that at the time of the interview our representatives were quite aware of the consistency and location of the German forces).

At 11:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup> Adm. Brivonesi was in turn was invited on the *Howe* by Adm. Power to insure on the Complete Provision of British Naval Resources and Base Accommodation. At the request that all the ships, without distinction of displacement, travel to Malta, Adm. Brivonesi replied by showing the telegram of Supermarina that, summing up the armistice clauses, he had retained in the ports controlled by us the torpedoes [DDs & TB] and the smaller ships (see paragraph 3): they never left for Malta. Adm. Power thanked the Adm. Brivonesi for assistance with the shipwrecks of the *Abdiel* and, discussing with him about the probable cause of the explosion, he recognized that it was a mine or a timed bomb dropped in previous bombings by allied aircraft.

It was immediately decided to proceed - through an accurate dredging of all the waters of the Base by the Maritime Military Command, in co-operation with British reinforcement minesweepers: in 15 days of continuous work, 21 mines or bombs were exploded. On one of them, on 22 September, the tugboat *Sperone* exploded, with almost a total loss of about 150 men on board to take them on leave on the island of San Pietro in Taranto.

Aboard the *Abdiel* was all the artillery of the Air Borne Division, carried on the other cruisers, and therefore the Maritime Military Command on the 10<sup>th</sup> at the disposal of the disembarking Division, and immediately advancing north of all the mobile artillery he had available, the antique pieces and the flame throwers. And since the Division did not have any means of transport that were traveling with a convoy of steamships, arbitrary vehicle requisitions and rentals began by British military officers of all degrees. In this regard, to give a picture of a situation that was never sanctioned and left the Base and the Province of Taranto with about forty lorries (clearly inadequate, with which, however, the Maritime Military Command, doing technical and organizing acrobatics, Managed to provide enough for long months to all the needs), we reproduce some paragraphs of the Maritime Military Commander report:

"I will say, for the record, that the first vehicle "requisitions" was that of the service at my disposal while waiting for me in front of the Command's door to bring me to the venue for the second interview on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> (I went on foot , Coming a little late). I immediately got to my energetic grievances



the general excuses of the General, and then the written promise of restitution. To make it short, between September 10 and 11, the Province remained practically *without efficient vehicles, with promise of prompt return. I have not been able to return a vehicle* (except for that of the Bishop, who stopped and dropped off in the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> on the Taranto - Martina Franca road, invoked my intervention, after which - I do not know what a miracle - the car would be on the next day) despite the continued verbal protests and a considerable exchange of letters between me and the British authorities, and despite the government intervening several times in the matter. Only at the end of December 1943 41 trucks *were returned in full state of use.*

"Between September 10 and 11, the allied soldiers also began arbitrary appropriations of gas, food, and locals.

"In this chaotic and unmanageable situation within a few hours or even a few days ... I was present at Gen. Palmer (Quartermaster for Embarked and Disembarking Forces) ... that if the Allied Commanders did not immediately discipline all the matter-in-agreement with me, I could not maintain the commitment not to undermine defensive efficiency as well as logistics and technique, of the Base of Taranto. He agreed with me and little by little ... he managed to put things in order."

With the arrival on September 13 of 7 steamers carrying the III and IV British brigades, the continual influx of troops, weapons, supplies and supplies of every species began, bringing the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army to its full consistency to solve in 20 months the problem of ridding - with our competition, within the limits of our possibilities by the Allies themselves largely conditioned - the Germans from Italy, advancing along the Adriatic side of the Apennine, while on the other side operated the 5<sup>th</sup> American Army, which after the liberation of Naples had established it as its main landing base.

The *Howe* left Taranto at 17:30 on September 10<sup>th</sup> with 5 DDs.

Adm. Power stayed in Taranto for two days; the 12<sup>th</sup> was replaced by Adm. Peters and he returned to Malta to resume his post as Commander of that Base.

#### *b) Brindisi.*

The Maritime Military Commander of Brindisi was Adm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Luigi Rubartelli. His hierarchical position, his dependencies and his responsibilities

were the same as those quoted by his fellow member of Taranto however, Brindisi is not the seat of the Command in Chief and there is no arsenal; the problems of Brindisi appeared very simplified, especially since British troops in Brindisi did not disembark.

The defenses of the base of Brindisi included: 4 pieces of great caliber, 10 pieces of medium caliber, 14 of pieces small caliber dual use on the sea front; 48 pieces anti-air and 92 anti-air machine guns for the anti-air Defense. They garrisoned the base (which had a perimeter of about 35 kilometers) three coastal battalions. In a regiment, with artillery of tactical cooperation, commanded by Gen. Brig. [Brigadier Gen.] Renato Comanducci.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Germans had about 200 military officers in Brindisi, including officers, for various services (armory and airport). There was only one Germanic landing craft in the harbor, and it left at midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup>; so did the service soldiers depart, and our men took over instead of the departed.

Shortly after the announcement of the armistice the Adm. Rubartelli had sent to Taranto his Chief of staff cap. vasc. [Captain] Gino Parilli, to get orders: at 02:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> he was back with the directives and orders, now quoted, common to all Navy Commands.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the troops of the garrison were concentrated along the front of the base to avoid infiltration of German troops moving from south to north.

With the arrival of the Sovereign, the Head of Government and the Supreme Military Authorities, Brindisi from the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup> became the temporal capital of Italy. It was then, by order of the Supreme Command, constituted a "safety belt" around Brindisi, to which the "Legnano" Division's units contributed to the troops of the base: the belt was completed on 16 September, also with works to strengthen the strongpoint.

From the 10<sup>th</sup> they began to flow - with naval means of every kind - civilian and military, coming from Dalmatia, Albania and Greece.

In Brindisi was established only one British office with operational functions responsible for its activity towards the Maritime Military Command, created within the seat of the Italian 2<sup>nd</sup> anti-submarine Group Command.

At the head of the office was a Naval Resident and the office was called the Extended Defense Office (X.D.O.): it was dealing with anti-submarine patrolling, traffic surveillance,

port police, radio links with the ships at sea, the opening and closing of the obstructions.

c) *Bari, Otranto, Gallipoli, Crotone.*

The Naval Command of Bari, held on September 8, 1943 by contrammiraglio rich. [Commodore (res.)] Tomaso Panunzio, was in the district of Maritime Military Command of Brindisi, from which he depended. Navy Bari had at his orders a sailor unit for the various services of the harbor, a minesweeping flotilla of 12 ships and the harbormaster: Admiral Panunzio was also the chief commander of the harbor.

The inner defense of the city and the port was entrusted to a port defense command, belonging to the Army.

At the time of the armistice, there were in port 20 steamers and motor ships, in addition to the minesweeping ships. On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> came the DD *Riboty* from Venice, escorting the tanker *Nettuno* (both ships had left Venice five hours before the proclamation of the armistice).

On the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Navy Bari received from Navy Brindisi the orders resulting from the armistice declaration and at 07:30, the statement that "without orders no ship of the Royal Navy should be delivered to the hands of military personnel of other nations; If it is not possible to oppose such an attempt, the ship will have to be sunk."

At 11:00 of the 9<sup>th</sup> in the morning, they appeared suspiciously in front of the gates of the perimeter wall of German trucks loaded with well-armed soldiers. The Harbor Defense Command, immediately informed by the Navy Command, ensured the immediate delivery of mobile platoons. But these did not arrive before the Germans opened the gates after passing through some of their units through the customs office, taking hold of the harbor facilities by boarding those steamships that were side by side at the south-east quayside. They forced by violence crews to land and they arranged on ships occupied explosives, firing on them with mortars settled on the gunner docks and hill of which the two motor ships *Volodda* and *Genepesca II* were armed: were severely damaged by explosions of charges onboard the *Volodda* and the steamer *Motia* slightly by cannon strikes alone; Sunken with explosive charges and mortar or cannon fire, *Genepesca II*: steamer *Frosinone* and motor ship *Vanda M.*

The troops promised by the Harbor Defense Command came with considerable delay and they pledged themselves against the Germans, fighting with

a wide inferiority of armament, so that at 16:30 the port was still in German hands.

Hostilities ended at 17:30 pm, when - for an agreement between the Command of the IX Army Corp and the Command of the German units that had in the meantime increased - the Germans withdrew from the port.

Some Germanic trucks crossing the city, heading to the harbor, had fired on our military at the corners of the streets. Near the Navy Command, one of the trucks was chased by a group of sailors who shot in the exchange of blows died a noncommissioned officer of the Harbor, which had been surrounded by a part of the attackers, and a sailor was wounded as was another NCO; there were also some dead and wounded on the steamships..

As soon as the Germans had withdrawn, accurate searches were made to find the explosive charges possibly left on the unhindered steamships, on stationary rail wagons along docks and harbor equipment. Any other damage was thus avoided.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> an English submarine presented in front of Bari, from which an officer came ashore who asked to supply the merchant and military ships as soon as possible to get them to Malta as planned by the armistice. The officer said that the English Command, aware of the attack on the port that was carried out the day before by the Germans, was concerned about taking the ships off before any further German offensive actions.

The submarine came in at 13.30 am and the Adm. Panunzio pointed out to his commander that the only military ship present (excluding the coastal minesweepers) was the DD *Riboty*, who should have stayed in an Italian port and did not move to Malta. The British commander agreed, but suggested the removal of the destroyer for safety reasons: in fact, the *Riboty* departed shortly after 17:00 for Taranto, and then continued for Malta with three Italian submarines.

Direct merchandise departed for Malta: a first group of nine on the same evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>, escorted by the English submarine; A second group of 7 in the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, escorted by another English submarine: a few hours earlier, the Tkr *Nettuno* departed for Malta.

In his report, the admiral reported that "the English was very courteous and very respectful"

Adm. Panunzio removed from Barletta the only steamer he had seen, the *Senio*, before the Germans penetrated that city. The steamboat had an order to move to Mola di Bari on September 11<sup>th</sup>: during the brief navigation it was attacked by German bombers, receiving slight damage and by 18:00 entered Mola.

A German column, coming from Foggia, occupied Barletta on the 12<sup>th</sup> and there was engaged by Italian troops, so that he could not descend on Bari where an English unit came in the evening of the same day.

Meanwhile, the British troops landed in Taranto had begun their march on the 11<sup>th</sup> in the north, opposed by German troops, while in other areas of Puglia there were clashes between Italian and German troops.

Just on the first day of battle, that is, the 11<sup>th</sup>, in a reconnaissance to Castellaneta (35 km northwest of Taranto on the road to Bari), Gen. Hopkinson was seriously injured in his head and died shortly after in the Taranto Naval Hospital.

It has been said that Foggia was liberated on September 28<sup>th</sup>: Castellaneta as stated on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Gioia del Colle on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Barletta on the 24<sup>th</sup>. In Bari - as has been said - an English unit had penetrated quite a bit earlier, bypassing the main front of operation.

It must be said that Bari soon became an important base for the withdrawal of members of the military and refugees from the other side of the Adriatic, for the conduct of the liberation war as a starting point for the execution of special missions along the coast North of the Gargano for the landing of supplies of the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army to supplement the base of Taranto.

Bari became a major combat objective, and was subjected to a sudden massive German air strike on 2 December 1943 (attack between 19:25 and 20:15). There was a great deal of damage to harbor and less significant to the inhabited areas. The national ship were sunk: motorship *Barletta*, Tkr. *Cassala*, Tug *Porto Pisano*, trawler *Ardito*. In addition, 14 Anglo - American steamships were sunk, which were under load, and four others were burned. Some of these steamships, which were loaded with ammunition, exploded causing further damage to other boats, ports, and the city. There were many victims.

Immediate work was initiated, in agreement with the Allied Authorities, for the recovery of the sunken ship and the repair of the

damaged harbor equipment and the buildings of the Navy Command, the Harbor Master's Office and the Barracks.

As for the ports of Otranto, Gallipoli and Crotona, nothing important is to be remembered. Navy organizations should be held ready for each second event, the orders of the Department of Taranto, but those sites were outside the operational guidelines that originated in Salerno on the Tyrrhenian side and Taranto on the Adriatic side, and therefore were not disturbed by major events.

However, in Crotona on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the motor torpedo boats who were there decided to move to Taranto on the threat of being captured by German troops, located in Calabria and marching to the Salerno area to counter the allied landing.

They left Crotona at 02:00 on September 9th, *Ms 53* and *65* and *Mas 547*, arriving at Taranto at 08:30.

## CHAPTER V

### EVENTS UP TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR ON GERMANY

#### 27<sup>th</sup> FIRST COHERENT COOPERATION EVENTS.

##### *a) Activities of I Ms flotilla of Capri.*

In paragraph 20-b, dealing with the events of Gaeta, there was occasion to mention some movements of boats belonging to the I Ms flotilla, commanded by cap. freg. [Commander] Alessandro Michdagnoli.

On September 8, 1943, the flotilla included 17 motosiluranti [MTB], eight of which were in Capri where there was an operational support point, 3 at Gaeta (of which we have already talked about) and 6 in La Spezia under repair.

Capri's support point Commander was cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Mario Paolo Pollina, who took to the sea personally when it was time to do missions with a group of motosiluranti. On the evening of September 7, he was ambushed by three motor torpedo boats in the area of Cape Palinuro, when at about 23:00 Capri received a message that revealed to him the presence at sea of an allied convoy directed towards the waters of Salerno. He then crossed between Licosa Point and Salerno, returning to Capri on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> with two motor torpedo boats, while the third (Ms 54 st.v. [Ensign] Marcello Ivonetti) remained in his place of ambush for not having intercepted the orders to return to base: this motor torpedo boat returned after launching his four torpedoes against a division of cruisers forming part of allied formation without hitting while at high speed he was crossing the formation of allied ships of all sorts on course to Salerno (1).

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(1) I would like to remind you that, in anticipation of the allied landing in the Gulf of Salerno, in Naples there were 8 submarines with the order of opposing the opposing operation. At 20:00 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, the submarine *Velella* (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Mario Patanè) was discovered and sunk with a

On the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> cap. vasc. [Captain] Mimbelli, who was in Capri in his capacity as Chief of the Operational Command of Motosiluranti and Mas, received a telephone order from Adm. Casardi (Maridipart Naples) to refrain from using the motosiluranti; Shortly afterwards the armistice was announced.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, after a meeting of the commanders to decide what to do, Commander Mimbelli made the decision to bring the motor torpedo boats present to the North, with Gaeta as the first stop, in order to clarify the situation by make direct contact with Supermarina.

Commander Pollina stayed in Capri, where on the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup> he saw all the motor torpedo boats returning with Commander Michelagnoli. He had succeeded on the day of the 9<sup>th</sup> to remove from Capri the German elements that were there.

On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, having information about the deployment of Anglo - American naval forces in the Salerno area, Commander Michelagnoli summoned Commander Pollina and all the commanders: unanimously it was resolved to contact the Allied Navy Command. The shortage of petrol justified the failure to depart for a port controlled by the Allies (as had Mimbelli been ordered by Supermarina on the 9<sup>th</sup>, indicating Palermo as the first step).

Commander Michelagnoli agreed with the Command of the Capri garrison to take all the measures to ensure the firm possession of the island, and assumed to his dependence the port and various small ships that were there.

On 12 September Salerno sent the sub chaser A.S. 13 with sten. vasc. [Ensign] Augustine Garino (who was Commander of *Ms 52*) to ask for an interview with the Allied Commander in Chief, who was American Vice Admiral Hewitt, sten. vasc. [Ensign] Garino met with the US DD *Knight* at Maiori (little east of Amalfi), whose Captain Andrews had the function of commodore and commander of allied forces north of the Gulf of Salerno. He immediately went to Capri with three British MTB (Motor torpedo boats) and with A.S. 13.

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torpedo from the British sub *Shakespeare* disappearing bodies and goods. The sub *Brin* operating near the *Velella* returning to the base had announced that he had seen the *Velella* disappear due to a torpedo fired by an enemy submarine. Subsequently, the Allies confirmed the information, specifying the name of the sinking vessel.



Commander Andrews, after Michelagnoli had informed him of what he knew about the situation and offered him the full and loyal collaboration of the II Mas flotilla, from which the motosiluranti now depended, agreed that Capri would be a point of support for the motosiluranti and safer for motor torpedo boats, much safer than Maiori's open labor.

The following morning the Italian motor torpedo boats met in the channel between Capri and the Campana coast with a squadron of British motor torpedo boats; The Italian motosiluranti went to the base in Maiori to get supplies, while Commander Michelagnoli went with a motor torpedo boat on the American auxiliary cruiser *Biscayne* to confer with Adm. Hewitt.

Commander Michelagnoli reported on the interview and its immediate consequences:

"Three more American admirals and one English were called after the interview. I summarized the situation of the flotilla expressing - in a temporary absence of superior directives - the attitude of full collaboration of the II flotilla with Allied forces. I made available Capri's base for allied ships. I provided news on swept routes and on the local situation. Finally, I proposed to go with the Ms to ascertain the situation in the area of Ischia - Procida, in order to facilitate and above all accelerate the allied action, which in the Salerno area slowly proceeded between uncertainties and prudence.

"Adm. Hewitt made the warmest welcome to our attitude and my proposals ... He immediately revoked the order to reach Palermo and provided that the Italian motosiluranti in perfect parity of treatment, without officers or allied personnel on board, continued their activity.

"On the 14th with two Ms, on which there were some allied officers, landed at Ischia,

"This operation and like that in Procida was reported by British Radio in an official statement ...

"Having contacted the National Territorial Authorities, the attitude towards Ischia was to follow in an analogous way with Capri, where it can be said that the Allies have come more as guests and then as occupants, in a very dignified and respectful manner to our prestige.

"In the following days our motosiluranti, in union with the M.T.B. of the XXXII flotilla and M.G.B. (Motor Gun Boats) of the XXXIII British flotilla, carried out numerous missions

of information patrols, disembarkation of "commandos", connection with Ischia, Procida and Salerno area ... It was also reactivated the service of the traffic lights [lighthouses] of Capri, Ischia and then of Ponza.

"At Capri, after a few days of stoppage, DD *Knight* with Commander Andrews left, replaced by the English Commodore Morse. Also with this Authority, the Flotilla Command has maintained its most cordial relations,

Among the numerous missions carried out by our motosiluranti, in cooperation with the Allies, until mid-October we must remember what led to the loss of *Ms 21*, commanded by sten. vasc. [Ensign] Luciano Marengo. On September 24, Cape d'Orso arrived near Salerno, landing an informer on the beach in front of Torre Sant'Agostino (halfway between Gaeta and Terracina), informer who then returned to the lines. On the return route, *Ms 21* struck a mine, which took off the propellers, 5 miles off Stendardo Point (Gaeta), so as not to fall into the enemy's hands, the motor torpedo boat was scuttled. The crew escaped to the coast, but was caught: the commander, after a period of imprisonment at Regina Coeli, was interned in Germany.

*Ms 24* (sten. Vasc. [Ensign] Salvatore Scirè) during an action near Procida reported some damage and four wounded for the shooting of a battery manned by the Germans. One of the sailors (torpedo man is Feliciano Ellena), who died for the wounds at the hospital in Capri, were was bestowed by the British along the Italians a solemn honorary funeral.

Lastly, it should be remembered that among the personalities who were timely removed from the risk of falling into German hands, it was through our A.S. 13 - at the British Information Service - Benedetto Croce with his family, transported from Sorrento to Capri.

At the end of September, three *Ms* (54, 56, 61) were transferred to Malta, where they later reached Taranto. There were three *Ms* in Capri (24, 52, 72).

Returning to the situation in the Partenope Islands, we reproduce another excerpt from the commander Michelagnoli's report:

"The garrison of Capri, with the exception of a unit of the M.V.S.N. [Militia] (Disarmed by order of Colonel Marseille, Commander of Territorial Defense from Capri, for the ambiguous attitude of some of its elements) has maintained the task of defending the island. Meanwhile, through the contacts of our *Ms* with Ischia,

even here the control of the situation was assumed by the command of the Flotilla through the commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vas [Anti-sub patrol] squadron, ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Claudio de Angeli. A company of this squadron and the anti-sub subgroup remained intact and ships in good state of efficiency (1).

"The immediate control of all the merchant ships, including a large number of motorized sailboats, was taken over. Sten. vasc. [Ensign] Francesco De Laurentis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> antisom group and captain of port C. Francesco Mugno was very effective at this work. At Capri as well as at Ischia the Navy, the only perfectly standing organ, was proud of taking on some civil functions as well, assisting the population in food and morale.

"Even with regard to police forces as civil authorities, the Navy took on the task of directing. In Ischia, for a doubtful attitude and for the departing of units, the Colonel commanding the island and his direct collaborators were stopped and transferred to Capri. With the available motorized sailing vessels there was also the collection from Sicily food for the population. The flotilla, in Capri and Ischia, also had the heavy task of concentrating refugee sailors from Naples, assisting them and vouching for them. About 400 in Capri and as many in Ischia were the sailors who reached our Command.

"This example of solidarity and faith in the body by the sailors has had a great effect on national civilians and military as well as on the Anglo - American ...

"I also sought to come to Castellammare together with the land forces of employment, and immediately contacted the civilian executives of the Shipyard to try to save the salvageable.

"Even to Naples I went with the Ms at the time of employment, for the prestige of our Flag. The sailors and port sailors were touching on my arrival in the harbor with Ms 24, the first ship and the first Italian flag banner that reappeared after those obscure days.

"I immediately resumed contact with the Navy authorities, just to return to their post right away ...".

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(1) At Ischia they passed to the orders of the II Mas Flotilla: 5 Vas of the 3<sup>rd</sup> squadron; 8 ships of the 8<sup>th</sup> Anti-submarine group; 9 auxiliary minesweepers. Another 3 ships of different types present in Sorrento.

*b) Mission of the Legionnaires and Oriani.*

By dealing with events in Corsica (paragraph 21-c) was mentioned on arrival at Ajaccio on 19 September of the DDs *Legionnaires* and *Oriani*, carrying the British General Peake and some military units. Here's how this mission originated and how it was done.

On the evening of 13 September the Adm. Willis (2nd in Command of the British Fleet of the Mediterranean, with his flag on the BB *Nelson*) asked Adm. Da Zara to meet him and ask him in the name of Adm. Cunningham who was willing to send two destroyers to supply weapons and ammunition to Italian troops in Corsica.

They left for Biserta 02:00 on 14<sup>th</sup> - where they would have to load the war material to be carried - the *Legionnaires* and *Oriani*. On the Legionary embarked on the Capitan Brownrigg (chief of staff of Cunningham) and a British officer with British reporting codes. The first landed at Biserta, where the destroyers arrived at 13:30 and from there they departed at 19:15 for Algiers: here were the supplies to be embarked. The stop at Algiers lasted from 11:45 of the 15<sup>th</sup> to 03:50 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, when the two destroyers continued for Ajaccio, arriving at 01:10 of the 19<sup>th</sup>.

In Ajaccio the stop was only one hour and twenty minutes: 30 tons of ammunition destined for Italian troops and 200 American commandos (made up of Italian military personnel) were quickly landed by the *Legionaries* on which they were, while the *Oriani* was free of men and materials, having been assigned the escort function.

The two destroyers departed from Ajaccio at 02:30, arrived the same evening on the 19<sup>th</sup> at 22:15 in Algiers, where they returned to Malta on the morning of September 29.

The two crossings, from Algiers to Ajaccio and vice versa, took place without warlike incidents. The risk, however, was remarkable because the Germans had the opportunity to mine the routes of the two destroyers with submarines and motor torpedo boats and to attack them with the air forces they still owned in Sardinia and the southwest of Corsica.

The mission had a great influence on the rapid evolution of the allies' state of mind to our Navy and the Nation, as it contributed to accelerating the process of evolution from mistrust to trust.

*c) The story of the hospital ship Gradisca.*

On the morning of 8 September, the *Gradisca*, of which was the director of health, Col. med. of the Navy Claudio Galeone, had departed from Venice to Patras where she would have to embark sick and injured.

During navigation, the crew (most militarily civilized) wanted to go directly to Malta after intercepting armistice communication; But Colonel Galeon was able to impose himself, convincing everyone that the humanitarian mission was to take precedence over every other consideration.

The ship arrived in front of Patras three days later, not finding the pilot ship to reach it, reversed the route and headed back to an Italian port. Shortly after Cape Papas (end of the southern coast of the Gulf of Patras) was diverted by German aircraft to Prevesa, where she embarked 800 wounded and was led to Patras under German control. Here the whole crew was disembarked and then interned in Germany, including healthcare staff along with volunteer Red Cross nurses.

Since then, the ship (which we considered to be derequisitioned) had service with German personnel, and - even though it exceeded the time limit referred to in this first part of the book - it is worth exhausting the subject.

On December 3, 1943, embarked at Lero 800 passengers to transport them to Trieste. During sailing, off the coast of Brindisi was stopped by two British torpedoes [DD or TB] diverted at Brindisi, where she entered the morning of December 9, disembarking 759 sick and injured Italians of the Army and the Navy. At 17:00 on the same day the ship resumed for Trieste on the order of the Allied Authorities, continuing to serve the Germans: with this gesture, the Allies wanted to demonstrate compliance with international standards on Hospital ship handling.

From Trieste he was transferred to Venice, where - after a long stopover - she left on May 4, 1944 for Marseilles, arriving on May 9. Departing from Marseille, with a load of British prisoners, for Barcelona, where they were exchanged with as many German prisoners.

On April 25, 1945, he was found in Venice and it was possible to avoid sabotage from the Germans who were withdrawing.

August 10, 1945 was again requisitioned and made available to the British for the transportation of military and for the return of former prisoners of war.

On January 23, 1946, while sailing from Port Said to Toulon, with 1400 returning passengers on board, she was stranded after a storm that prevented the visibility on the Gaudo Island to the south of Crete.

The ship was not able to be refloated, but all the crew were rescued by British ships the CV *Trumpeter*, the CL *Orion*, MS *Fancy*, rescue ship *Saloenture*, two tugboats and Greek DD *Kriti*. After a long time it was recovered by a specialized navy expedition.

*d) Recovering personnel from the eastern shore of the Lower Adriatic and the Upper Ionian.*

The first three weeks after the armistice were characterized by the intense traffic of the two southern Italian and Ionian basins (headed by Brindisi and Bari) of torpedoes, motor torpedo boats and some merchant ships to assist and recover of military and retired civilians from Dalmatia, Albania, Greece and the offshore islands.

First of all, it should be said that in the first days the operations were hindered by the British ban on taking to the sea, until further decisions, to Italian naval ships: on 17 September, following a communication from Adm. Peters, two torpedoes who were at sea were called in the harbor. The ban was reiterated on the 18<sup>th</sup>, so that in order to send to Lagosta a escorted steamer for the purpose of embarking on 1000 soldiers that flowed on to the island, he had to ask for and wait for the English authorization (the mission was then carried out by the steamer *Fanny Brunner* between 25 And 27 September),

However, between September 9 and 15 Sept., there was the activity of spontaneous flow of military and merchant ships to Apulian ports, obedience to armistice clauses or as a result of some urgent need (such as sending Brindisi to Corfù on September 13 the TB *Sirtori* and *Stocco*, of which we have already spoken), This activity was in the previous chapter; Below we will deal with that mainly from September 16 onwards.

Too long, however, would describe one for each missions accomplished. For historic purposes, it is sufficient to make a chronological-statistical summary.

The directions on which traffic took place were three:

a) Bari - Pelagosa - Lagosta (where fugitives and refugees from the Dalmatian coast also fled) and return;

- b) Brindisi - Santi Quaranta - Corfu and return;
- c) Bari - Curzola - Spalato and return,

a) On the first director there were 7 missions between 16 and 27 September:

From 16 to 19: the steamers *Ulisse*, *Borsini*, *Pallade* and Tug *Koper* with Cov. *Pomona* (Pelagosa and Lageda, for personnel retrieval).

On the 20<sup>th</sup>: 2 motorized sailing vessels (from Lagosta to Vieste, with personnel). From 21 to 23: Aux. Cr. *Ljubljana* (Lagosta, carrying food and water for military people flowing from Dalmatia).

The 24<sup>th</sup>: Tkr. *Mincio* (Lido, for supplying the island water).

From 24 to 27: Aux. Cr. *Ljubljana* (to collect political internees of fascism).

From 25 to 28: steamers *Ulisse* and *Fanny Brunner* with TB *Cosenz* (Lageda, to bring 6000 rations of food for the garrison and withdraw military personnel flowing from Dalmatia). Loss of the "*Cosenz*".

From 26 to 27: Mission of Tug *Porto Fossone* in attempt to rescue TB "*Cosenz*".

From the islands of Pelagosa and Lagosta, 2670 people would be recovered.

b) On the second route, 9 missions were carried out between 17 and 30

September:

On the 17<sup>th</sup>: TB *Sirio* and *Clio*, at the command of the contramm. [Commodore] Galati (Corfu with supplies, recalled to Brindisi, before completing the mission, by order from Adm. Peters) (1).

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(1) In connection with the interruption of this mission, the Supreme Command, on the same day, on 17 September, to Mac Farlane (Head of Allied Control Commission Italy) the following note:

"Adm. Peters asked the Italian Navy Ministry to immediately recall to Brindisi the torpedoes *Sirio* and *Clio* in navigation to carry ammunition and water supplies to Corfu, where Italian troops resisted tirelessly to attempts of German troops to occupy.

"It is represented to Gen. Mac Farlane, which, in this way, weakens the defense of that island that Italian forces do in the common interest.

"It is therefore desirable that this action of our torpedoes is authorized and that this authorization is received urgently. Where such authorization

- om 19 to 20: Motor ship *Probitas* with TBs *Sirio* and *Clio* (Santi Quaranta, for personnel recovery).
- om 19 to 20: *Ms 33* (Corfù and Santi Quaranta, with supplies of medicines) (1).
- om 21 to 23: Steamers *Dubac* and *Salvatore* with TB *Stocco* and Cov. *Sibilla* (Santi Quaranta, for personnel recovery).
- om 24 to 26: Steamer *Dubac* and Motor ships *Salvore* and *Probitas* with TB *Stocco* and Cov. *Sibilla* (Santi Quaranta, for personnel recovery). *Loss of the TB Stocco*, already described in paragraph 25-c, and of the ships *Dubac* and *Probitas*. On the return route the TB *Sirio*, sent in place of the *Stocco*, joins the convoy.
- ne 26<sup>th</sup>: *Mas 519*, pilot boat *Calliano*, motorized sailing vessels *Famiglia* and *Fernando* (to Brindisi from Corfu, with 450 German prisoners).
- ne 26<sup>th</sup>: *Mas 516* (Santi Quaranta, to bring orders to that garrison and to the *Probitas*, which does not find her because she had already sunk).
- ne 28<sup>th</sup>: Greek motorboat and lifeboats of the *Probitas* to Brindisi (the first in Corfu with the cap. freg. [Commander] Ostuni and 3 men, the second from Santi Quaranta with the survivors of the ship).
- ne 30<sup>th</sup>: Greek motorized sailing vessel to Otranto, coming from the island of Fano (with 7 soldiers from a look-out station of Corfu, the Italian lighthouse, 21 Army soldiers and 5 Greeks).

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to supply Corfù can not be granted, it will be necessary in the near future to withdraw all the garrison, leaving the island to the Germans ".

It is believed that the initial attitude of the British, contrary to every mission of Italian ships, was determined by diffidence: they probably feared that some ship would take the road to the north to go to work with the Nazi-Fascists. But such an attitude disappeared soon. However, in the early times it brought damage to the allied cause, because it prevented a useful collaboration that would be given loyally in all fields according to our possibilities.

- (1) *Ms. 33* (sten. vasc [Ensign] Renato Bechi) brought to Corfù a supply of medicines and then continued for Santi Quaranta, where the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Luigi De Ferrante - who had been sent from Brindisi to see the situation on the spot - agreements with the commander of the garrison for the repatriation of the troops. When the mission was completed, the motor torpedo boat was back in Brindisi on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. During the stop in Corfu, *Ms. 33* was attacked by 3 German seaplanes; his reaction was so effective that 2 seaplanes were shot down.



From the military sector of Corfu - Santi Quaranta, 6400 men would be recovered, including 450 German prisoners.

c) On the third route were carried out 4 missions between September 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>:  
On the 20<sup>th</sup>: 3 motorized sailing vessel (2 Italians from Spalato and 1 Croatian from Ploce) arrive in Bari with refugees.  
From 22 to 25: Steamers *Diocleziano*, *Ston*, *Corfù*, *Persani*, *Borsini* and *Risagno* with TB *Aretusa* and Cov. *Chimera* (Spalato, for personnel recovery). Loss of “*Diocleziano*”.  
From 25 to 29: Tug *Capodistria* with 3 motorized sailing vessels (to recover 1,500 soldiers still on the stranded *Diocleziano*, return to Bari with the survivors of the ship).  
Uncertain dates: Numerous vessels of various types (from Korcula to Vieste, with staff from Korcula).

From the area of Spalato and the island of Korčula 4940 men were recovered.

d) To these three groups of transport missions must be added the personnel evacuated from the Bocche di Cattaro between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September:  
The 11<sup>th</sup>: Steamer *Teodo*, MS R. 27 and 2 tugs (depart on own initiative, without explicit consent of the Navy Command, with about 250 soldiers of various arms).  
The 12<sup>th</sup>: Motor ships *Dessiè* and *Saturnia* (similarly departed, with the staff of a battery).  
The 14<sup>th</sup>: Steamers *Borsini*, *Diocleziano*, *Fimny Brunner* and Tkr. *Annarella* (for Bari, with numerous soldiers).

Thus, 6200 people would flow from the Bocche di Cattaro.

e) In addition to this series of operations, organized by Navy Commands, it is necessary to take into account 35 journeys made between 16 September and 13 October (the starting date of the Cobelligerance, officially recognized with the declaration of war on Germany) from small ships, generally motorized sailing vessels flowing to the ports of Puglia from various points of the opposite coasts with about 2000 people on board in total.

Summing up, they were saved from capture by the Germans across the Adriatic and the Ionian, in the first weeks after the armistice:

From Lagosta and Pelagosa	2,670 personnel
From Corfu and Santi Quaranta	6,400 “
From Spalato and Curzola	4,940 “
From Cattaro – Teodo	6,200 “
Subtotal	20,210 “
From various locations for single initiatives	<u>2,000</u> “
Total	22,210 “

If these men (part military and part civilian), who have been carefully re-evaluated, add some more thousands of people with the most diversified maritime means from across the Adriatic (including the Italian coasts occupied by the German invader), To estimate that, through the waters of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, the Navy has saved about 25,000 men.

It has been noted that in the course of the now synthesized activity we suffered the loss of the TB *Cosenz* and the merchant vessels *Dubac*, *Probitas* and *Diocleziano* (in addition to those of *Sirtori* and of *Stocco*, already described).

We will briefly discuss the circumstances that led to these losses.

#### 1. - *The loss of TB Cosenz.*

The *Cosenz* had come to Lagosta, escorting the *Ulisse* and *Fanny Brunner*, at 19:05 on September 25th.

As the steamships unloaded the food and loaded the soldiers and civilians to be transported to Bari, the torpedo was anchored in the roadstead near to the northern tip of the Bay of Lagosta, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer was sent by the commander (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Giovanni Sorrentino) to supervise and solicit the embarkation operations at the quay of Valle San Pietro, to which the steamers had come alongside.

At 21:25, the torpedo boat and sailed off a little, with running lights lit from the point of anchorage awaiting the ships that were leaving.

At 21:36 the steamer *Ulisse* collided with the torpedo boat on her left side at the aft engine room (corresponding to starboard propeller) despite the reports made by the torpedo boat

to call the attention and prompt maneuver performed by the commander to avoid the collision.

The Commander Sorrentino ordered *Fanny Brunner* to continue alone and to the *Ulisse* to stay to tow the torpedo boat to the shallow water at Point S. Pietro.

The leak caused the flooding of several rooms, of which - after a few hours of collision work and drainage - remained flooded only the engine area of the stern and the commander could with the left-hand engine alone bring the torpedo- to the right side of the pier of Valle S. Pietro.

The ship, having by now the buoyant ability assured, could have been saved by towing by the *Ulisse*, if the on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> violent attacks by German aircrafts were not fierce against Lagosta's anchorage. The steamer was sent to anchor at another point on the island and was unharmed. The *Cosenz* was never hit, but numerous bombs fell so close to lifting it, causing it to fall back against the quay and cause large fire on board. New fires were produced and the fire could not be tamed for lack of means of extinction. When the ship was in condition that it could no longer be maintained, the commander disembarked the crew and - left on board with a few men - cut the mooring lines: under the effect of the wind the torpedo, by now reduced to a wreck in flames, drifted off, and shortly thereafter, at 14:18 on September 27<sup>th</sup>, sank leaving above water the end of the funnel and part of the mast.

The *Ulisse*, also embarked on the *Cosenz*'s crew, went on to Bari where she arrived at 14:30 on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

It should be recalled that during the air strikes the torpedo reacted with the weapons to the end of the ammunition, hitting two planes, one of which was seen falling by the partisans on one of the Lagosta hills.

## *2. - The loss of Dubac and Probitas.*

The convoy of which these two merchant ships belonged together with motor ship *Salvare* had left Brindisi, with the escort of the *Stocco* and *Sibilla*, at 05:20 on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The TB *Stocco* at 13:00 on the same day had left the convoy - as has been said - to take anti-invasion action in the southern part of Corfu.

The convoy carried out military embarkation operations at Santi Quaranta in four hours at midnight on the 24<sup>th</sup>, loading 2700 men only on the *Saluore* and *Dubac* because the motor ship *Probitas* could not sail or steam along in view after coming late for engine malfunction.

So he sailed to Brindisi with two steamships and the Cov. *Sibilla*; was joined by the TB *Sirio* at 07:30 on the 25<sup>th</sup>, sent to reinforce the escort in place of the TB *Stocco*. Immediately after 07:30, an attack of 12 Stukas was pronounced - despite the united reaction of the ships, with positive results against two of the attackers – they hit the *Dubac*, which began to list on the left side while continuing to sail. The degree of heeling became dangerous by *Siria's* order (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Antonio Cuzzaniti), and the *Dubac* directed towards noon to strand a mile north of the lighthouse of Otranto. The *Siria*, who had accompanied him, embarked the wounded from the steamer, while all the rest of the crew was taken aboard six motor sailing vessels from Otranto.

The *Saluore* had continued to Brindisi with *Sibilla*, arriving at 15:45, while the *Sirius* arrived at 17:10.

The motor ship *Probitas* was hit on September 26<sup>th</sup> at Santi Quaranta after three consecutive attacks by Stukas formations.

### 3. - *The loss of the Diocleziano.*

This ship was hit by Stukas air bombs on the return route from Spalato to Bari, with the convoy of which he was part, at 07:30 on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

After the damage suffered, he was taken to the Busi Island, southwest of Lissa, with 300 dead aboard. The Cov. *Chimera* remained in place to assist and the rest of the convoy (except *Ston*, held by the partisans) went on to Bari, where she arrived at 08:30, not without a second air strike at 09:42, during which the steamer *Borsini* was hit by a bomb - which fortunately did not explode.

Meanwhile, at 09:30, another Stukas formation had attacked the stranded *Diocletian* and *Chimera*, which hit two aircraft and then returned to Bari with 178 shipwrecked and 62 wounded from the *Diocletian*. The rest of the crew embarked on the steamer (1044 men) was recovered by the *Koper* and three motor sailing boats, as mentioned in the chronological summary.

28<sup>th</sup> THE CUNNINGHAM - DE COURTEN AGREEMENT.

At 10:50 on September 23, after a preparatory correspondence exchange, at Taranto arrived at Adm. Andrew Cunningham Commander of the Allied Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, aboard the CL *Euryalus* escorted by the DD. *H.15* and two torpedoes for signing an agreement with Adm. De Courten about the use of Italian ships in the fight against Germany as a consequence of the concept contained in the "Quebec Document" (paragraph 1) and concerning the amount of aid Italy could have given to the cause of United Nations (1).

Here is the text of the agreement signed on onboard of the *Euryalus*:

"Since the Armistice was signed between the Head of the Italian Government and the Commander in Allied Headquarters, by virtue of which all the Italian warships and the Italian merchant navy were unconditionally made available to the United Nations, and having the H.M. the King of Italy and the Italian Government subsequently expressed the desire that the Italian Fleet and the Italian Navy should be used in favor of the allied effort to cooperate in the continuation of the war against the Axis Powers, the following principles governing the future use of the Italian military and merchant navy.

1. (a) Ships that may be used to actively cooperate with the allied effort shall be maintained in armament and shall be used at the command of the Captain of the Mediterranean, as may be established between the Allied Commander in Chief and the Italian Government.

(b) Ships that can not be used shall be kept in reserve at the designated ports, with such disarming measures as may be necessary.

(c) The Italian Government will communicate the names and locations of the Warships and the merchant ships currently in its possession and formerly belonging to Nations belonging to the United Nations. These ships will have to be returned without delay, as soon as the Allied Commander will have believed that he will give the order. This without prejudice to possible negotiations between Governments

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(1) Assisted at the meeting of the two leaders: by the English Commodore Dick and the Adm. Peters; From the Italian side by Adm, sq. [R. Adm.] Bruto Brivonesi, cap. vasc. [Capitan] Giuriati and cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Lovatelli who interprets.

which may then take place on the replacement of ship losses caused by the United Nations in the Italian operation.

(d) The Allied Navy Commander in Chief shall act as a Allied delegate Commander in Chief for everything related to the use and the provisions relating to the Italian Fleet and the Italian Navy as well as related matters.

(e) It must be clearly understood that the measure under which armistice clauses are amended to allow the abovementioned and subsequent measures depend on the extent and effectiveness of Italian cooperation.

2. *Operating Methods.* The Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean will make available to the Italian Navy a Navy High Ranking Officer with an appropriate staff who will be responsible to the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean for all matters related to the Italian Fleet and will be the way through which issues relating to the Italian merchant navy will be dealt with.

The Flag Officer (Flag Officer) will hold the Italian Navy Ministry aware of the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean request and will act in close cooperation with regard to the issue of any order to the Italian Fleet.

3. (a) All *battleships* shall be deployed in ports to be designated and shall be applied to those disarmament measures which may be ordered. These disarmament measures will be such that ships can be returned to service, if this seems desirable. Each ship will have on board an Italian partial staff to keep it in good condition and the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean will have the right of inspection at any time.

(b) *Cruisers.* Those cruisers that can have immediate useful use will be maintained in armament. It is currently considered that a Division of 4 cruisers will be sufficient; the others will be kept in reserve like the battleships. With a certain degree of preparation, to be returned to service if necessary.

(c) *Destroyers* and *torpedoes*. It is intended to keep them armed and to use them for escort and similar tasks as required. It is proposed to subdivide them into escort groups

operating as organic units and establishing their bases in Italian ports.

(d) *Small ships*. Mas [MTB], minesweepers, auxiliary vessels and small ships will be fully employed, and detailed provisions will be adopted by the Italian Navy Ministry along with the Flag Officer Liaison for their best use.

(e) *Submarines*. First, the submarines will be held in ports to be designated, at a later date they can be returned to service according to the need to aid with the allied effort.

4. *Status of the Italian Navy*. As a result of these changes in the terms of the Army, all Italian warships will continue to fly their flag. A strong percentage of the Italian Navy will remain in service activities, and will retain the control of its ships and fight alongside United Nations Forces against Axis Powers.

5. *Mercantile Navy*. It is intended to operate the Italian merchant navy under the same conditions as United Nations merchant ships. That is, all the United States merchant vessels are a pool that is used as it may be considered necessary for the benefit of all the United Nations, including of course the need for supplying and maintaining Italy. The system will be similar to that used in North Africa, where the North Africa Shipping Board controls all British, British and French navy under certain arrangements, which will have to be accurately determined with regard to Italian ships. That a part of Italian vessels will work in the Mediterranean to and from Italian ports, it should be borne in mind that this will not always be exclusive but that it is to be expected that ships flying the Italian flag can be used elsewhere as is the case with merchant vessels of all United Nations.

Italian merchant vessels, as indicated in this paragraph, will fly the Italian flag and be manned by crews provided by the Italian Navy Ministry."

Under the latter part of the agreement, there was an Undersecretary for the Merchant Navy, headed by

the Adm. sq. [R. Adm] Pietro Barone, who depended on the Ministry of the Navy.

Two days after the signing of the agreement, on September 25, Vittorio Emanuele III addressed the sailors the following message:

*Sailors of Italy*

Now after a few days, and already seems like centuries, you have left our ports in silence to obey, in perfect discipline, the conditions of the armistice demanded and accepted for the supreme interest of the country.

I have shared all the deep bitterness of your departure and I have offered with you to the homeland this new hard test of dedication and sacrifice.

Now, for the honest and generous acknowledgment of the Anglo-American Commander in Chief, the sea, witness and jealous guardian of your worth, will reap the mighty echo of your faith, the King's grateful and communion voice comes to you.

New trials await you, new glories will come to you.

*Sailors of Italy*

Prove to all that every Italian be able and can give for the freedom and salvation of the country.

VITTORIO EMANUELE

September 25, 1943 •

29<sup>th</sup> MOVEMENT OF THE SHIPS TO CONCENTRATE AT MALTA.

As a result of the Cunningham - Courten agreement, they started a few days after the departures of ships that had gone to Malta to remain immobilized pending decisions: precluding moves to their use in war operations.

They had reached Malta within the first 12 days following the proclamation of the armistice 79 ships: 5 battleships, 7 cruisers, 7 destroyers, 12 torpedo boats, 6 corvette, 23 submarines, 1 aircraft transport, 6 Motor Torpedo Boats, 9 anti-submarine patrol boats, 2 sun hunters, 1 tugboat. The last one to arrive was, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the group commanded by Admiral Nomis of Pollone (see paragraph 10).



In order to decongest the port of Malta, which was filling in Italian ships, the British authorities had decided on September 12 to disperse a part to Alexandria of Egypt.

At 08:30 on the 14<sup>th</sup> they left Malta for Alexandria the following ships escorted by the BB *Howe* and *King George*, 6 DD (including the Greek DD *Basilissa Olga*) and a considerable aerial force:

- BB *Vittorio Veneto* and *Italia* (9<sup>th</sup> Div. Adm. Accorretti);
- CL *Eugenio di Savoia*, *Duca d'Aosta*, *Montecuccoli*, *Cadorna* (7<sup>th</sup> Div. Adm. Oliva, who was the most senior);
- *Da Recco*, *Velite*, *Artigliere*, *Grecale*.

There remained in Malta the 5<sup>th</sup> Division (Adm. Da Zara) with *Duilio*, *Doria*, *Cesare*; The 8<sup>th</sup> Division (Adm. Biancheri) with *Duca degli Abruzzi* and *Garibaldi* and the *Pompeo Magno* attached, in addition to all the smaller ships present and later arrivals.

Upon arrival in Alexandria on the morning of September 16<sup>th</sup>, the ships landed in the outer harbor called Mex Anchorage, where they stayed for the rest of the time except for a short mooring period in the harbor for the landing of ammunition, except those of the anti-aircraft.

Adm. Oliva was immediately summoned to the *Howe* by Adm, Sir John Cunningham (cousin Sir Andrew Cunningham, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean), who was Commander in Chief of the Levant Station, who in the presence of other admirals read a communication containing the Provisions of “disarmament” decreed by allied governments for ships arriving in Alexandria.

They were much stricter than those set on arrival in Malta and already in a friendly lightening: Adm. Oliva immediately made it known and was struck above all by the prescription of putting on a ship a large number of armed guards and prohibiting ships from communicating with each other. The next day, September 17, Adm. Oliva made his remarks at Adm. John Cunningham in writing.

The work in Alexandria was an exactly a month, that is until October 16, when - as you will see - the ships left that base.

That month put tough test of the moral resistance of the crews, for which it was forbidden to go ashore, while the anchorage waters, for seasonal conditions, were almost always agitated and rarely allowed to swim around for refreshments of a humid and warm climate. They contributed to

the hardness of people's lives, the following factors, as summarized by Adm. Oliva at the end of his detailed report: "The time spent in Alexandria was a bit hard for the conditions of spirit, for the difficulty of supplies especially water, climate, inception, uncertainty of the future, and for the rather rigid treatment used by the British Naval Authorities. However, since the work of commanders who, according to the directives I have given, led the officers inviting them to stay frequently among the people, they used, depending on the right cases, severity or necessary understanding of the moment and the circumstances in which they were seeking not to degenerate badly in indulgence or even in badly weakness, and who have been able to alternate on board exercises with all possible sporting activities (regattas, indoor racing and cleaning competitions, English lessons, sea baths, swimming races, vocational and illiterate schools, cinemas, improvised orchestras, variety shows and even performances by comedies written by officers or NCO officers), since this assiduous work - I say - the morale of crews after a period of comprehensible depression and disorientation, has been kept high. With frequent visits to the ships of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division and DDs by myself and those of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division by Adm. Accorretti and profiting from them to speak with simplicity to the crews, there was also the direct contact between them and the admiral commanders. In the end, there were very few serious disciplinary deficiencies; the shortcomings of the crime, and thus prosecuted, were only four [of about 8,000 men. embarked]: a refusal of obedience and three attempts of desertion [culled by the Egyptian police, who stopped the deserters shortly after swimming ashore.

Particularly resentful was the close surveillance carried out around the anchored ships in patrol boats, which, with their rude and unshakeable attitude, faced every minor irregularity (accidental delay of a few in getting the boat back on board, the occasional delay in lifting all boats at sunset, some light visible from outside at night, etc..) gave crews the feeling of being unjustly treated as prisoners.

From the beginning of October onwards they helped to improve the spirit conditions of the "internees" of Alexandria some great events of note.

a) On October 4, the King, in a proclamation to the Italian people, said, among other things, that "our fleet, having passed admirably

discipline the proof of loyalty to the armistice pacts, reopen the seas by bringing the tricolor high, "filling the hearts of joy and hope for a near resumption of activity.

And in fact, in coincidence with this proclamation, repatriation from Malta to Taranto began with all the ships that were there:

- the 4<sup>th</sup> left Malta in three groups, departing for a few hours from each other, the following ships: *Abruzzi*, *Garibaldi*, *Pompeo Magno*, *Legionario*, *Onani*, *Libra*, *Calliope* - *Gabbiano* and *Pellicano* with 6 MTB - *Minava*, *Cormorano*, *Danaide*, *Ape* with 9 Vas and 1 Csmg [Sub Hunter];

- the 5<sup>th</sup> left Malta: *Alisco*, *Ardimentoso*, *Animoso*, *Fortunale*, *Indomito*, *Mosto*, *Fabrizi*, *Carini*;

- the 6<sup>th</sup> departed from Malta: *Riboty*, *Orione*, *Ariete*, 1 Csmg and the 3 subs *Marea*, *Giada*, and *Nichelio*;

- the 6<sup>th</sup> left for Naples (for the purpose of supplying electricity to the port area) Subs *Platino* *Vortice* and *Onice*.

So on October 7, only BB *Duilio*, *Doria* and *Caesar* remained in Malta, besides the aircraft transport ship *Miraglia*, which reached Taranto on 21 October after being replaced in Malta by the *Quarnerolo* (1) 18<sup>th</sup> from Taranto, and 17 submarines; of these, one only left Malta before October 13 (*Axum* for Taranto on 9 October).

b) On October 5, came to the Adm. Oliva was a telegram (which was October 1, but it did not bear the date on the copy in the hands of the admiral) with which the Minister informed him that the departure for Taranto of the cruisers and the DDs was imminent; The 9<sup>th</sup> Division would remain in Alexandria. Adm. Oliva communicated good news to his subordinates and met with Adm. Poland (commander of the base of Alexandria) to establish the ways of repatriation of cruisers and DD and to repair those BBs staying in the Egyptian port.

When the ammunition of the units had to be re-embarked and the puncture tools and shutters, which had also landed, were removed, the departure could not take place until October 16<sup>th</sup>.

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(1) The *Quarnerolo*, former Yugoslavia *Hvar*, was a submarine support vessel. As such, he had a well-equipped workshop, as was the *Miraglia* that was a aircraft carrying and supporting ship. At the armistice was in *Fiume*, where she left on September 9 for Brindisi and then for Taranto. It was returned to Yugoslavia through England on 19 March 1945.

c) On October 13, the notice of Italy's declaration of war to Germany clearly stated that the new opponent had been officially recognized and that the Navy would therefore fully resume its duties thereby removing from the crews a wretched uncertainty.

### 30<sup>th</sup> MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES.

#### a) *The Adriatic and Ionian Sea sector*

In September, there was considerable traffic on coastal routes between the ports of Puglia, including the Tremiti Islands, between the ports of Apulia and Taranto, with the aim of transferring ships from one port to another or bringing supplies to some needy, participated in this activity torpedo, corvette, tugboat, tanker, motorized sailing vessels.

It also continued the influx from the eastern shore of small boats (limited number) with the last few military and civilians, who could reach the country,

In the first thirteen days of October, the same kind of traffic continued, with some steamboats taking part. It is to be remembered:

- transfer from Brindisi to Taranto of Cov. *Fenice* with Sub *Mameli* on 5 October; after passing Santa Maria di Leuca, however, the Sub left the Cov and joined the group consisting of Cov. *Driade* and *Scimitarra* and subs *Otaria* and *Pisani*, directed from Taranto to Naples, where she arrived on the 7<sup>th</sup>;

- Arrival in Bari on the 4<sup>th</sup> of four national motor sailboats coming from Lagosta, with 2 officers, 2 NCO and 53 soldiers of the Army, 2 officers and 3 NCOs of the Navy, 512 civilians including 90 Yugoslav Jews;

- Arrival at Otranto from the island of Fano was the 8<sup>th</sup> of a Greek motorboat, with 10 Italian soldiers (4 of the Navy and 6 of the Army), 7 Italian civilians, 1 officer and 2 Greek NCOs, 2 British officers.

In the Ionian Sea, in addition to the traffic with the ports of Apulia and Naples, there was some traffic between Taranto, Gallipoli and Augusta. Two episodes are to be remembered.

At 10:16 on Oct. 6, an English tanker escorted by TB *Clio* and Cov. *Urania* left Augusta for Taranto: *the first escort*

*made by Italian ships to an allied ship.* By 10:00 on the next day, the tanker - despite repeated signals from *Clio* - headed for a route that took her into a mined area, stumbling into a mine at 10:35. *Clio* asked Taranto for two tugboats, which were immediately sent. The tanker managed to set off and go to Taranto, assisted by tugboats and escorted by the *Urania* (in the meantime the *Clio* received the order to continue for Taranto without waiting for the tanker).

On the 8th day, the hospital ship *Toscana*, which had been made available to the British, carried out her first voyage from Taranto to Augusta, transporting wounded and ill men of the British armed forces.

*b) The Tyrrhenian Sea and the Western Mediterranean Sector.*

In this area, in addition to coastal traffic, it is worth remembering:

The escort of TB *Libra*, *Calliope* and *Fortunale* to the steamers *Anna Capano*, *Genepesca I* and *Barletta* from Taranto to Algiers and return between October 8 and 17: *the first convoy of Italian ships sailing in service of the Allies.* (This convoy, though departed from Taranto, is quoted here as it has completed three-quarters of the sailing in the Tyrrhenian Sea and in the western Mediterranean).

The arrival in Naples on October 7 of six submarines, already mentioned: three from Malta (*Platino*, *Vortice* and *Onice*) and three from Brindisi-Taranto (*Mameli*, *Otaria* and *Pisani*).

Arrival in Algiers (from Taranto) of the hospital ship *Principessa Giovanna*, October 3rd. The ship resumed from Algiers to Bari on October 6, after embarking the infirm of the United Nations forces, arriving on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

There was also an intense movement of motor torpedo boats and Mas between the ports of Naples area and among those of Corsica - Sardinia, for transportation of officers and allied commissions on their way to inspect various locations and to agree with Italian Authority measures to be taken and various services of the Navy Command in Corsica.

31<sup>st</sup> THE DECLARATION OF WAR ON GERMANY.

The National Government communicated to Germany on 11 October through the Italian and German Embassies in Madrid that "in the face of the continuous and intensified acts of war

against Italians by the German Armed Forces, Italy is considered to be from 15:00 on 13 October at war with Germany”.

The Marshal Badoglio gave the announcement to the Italian people with the following message of the 13<sup>th</sup>:

"With the declaration made on September 8 c.y. by the government which I presided, announcing the acceptance by the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Anglo - American Armed Forces of the armistice we requested, ordered the Italian troops to remain with the weapons, ready to repel any attempt of violence that was done from anywhere.

"With simultaneous actions, evidently showing a higher order of time, the German troops imposed disarmament on some of our units, while in most cases they went decisively to the attack. But this is not limited to German domination and ferocity. We already had the notion of doing this in the abuses, thefts, and all kinds of violence committed in Catania when they were our allies.

"Even wilder scenes against the unsuspecting populations occurred in Calabria, Puglia and Salernitana. But where the enemy ferocity exceeded every limit of human imagination it was in Naples.

"The heroic population of that city, which suffered every torment for weeks, effectively engaged with Anglo-American troops to flee the hated German.

"Italians!

"There will be no peace in Italy while one German will cross our soil. We must all, be firm, march ahead with our friends from the United States of America, Great Britain, Russia and other United Nations. In the Balkans, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, everywhere Italian troops have witnessed the same acts of aggression and cruelty, they have to fight to the last against the Germans.

"The government that I preside will soon be completed, calling on the representatives of every political party to form a true expression of democratic government in the country, without prejudice to the principle already stated that after the war, the Italian people will be free to choose, with the elections, the government that will most appreciate it.

"I inform you that the H.M. the King gave me the task of announcing the declaration of war on Germany on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

Immediately after this declaration of war was issued simultaneously from Washington, London and Moscow the following tripartite statement.

"The governments of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union recognize the position of the Royal Italian Government as outlined by Marshal Badoglio and accept the active collaboration of the Italian nation and its armed forces as cobelligerents in the war against Germany. Military events since 8 September and brutal treatment by the Germans to the Italian population until Italy's declaration of war to Germany have in fact made Italy itself cobelligerents with the American, British and Soviet governments who wished to continue to cooperate with the Italian Government on this basis. The three governments take note of the promise made by the Italian government to return to the will of the Italian people after the Germans will be expelled from Italy, and it is understood that nothing can make them abstain from the absolute right of the Italian people to decide without external influences and Constitutional paths on the democratic form of government that it will eventually have.

"Relations between the governments of Italy and the United Nations can not in themselves affect the recently signed clauses, which retain their full effectiveness and can only be modified by an agreement between Allied governments in the light of the assistance that the Italian Government will be able to give to the cause of the United Nations.

It is now appropriate to reproduce two documents filed on 17 November 1943, when cobelligerance was already legally in effect for 34 days, documents relating to the Navy.

On November 17, the Allied Authorities signed by Adm. Courten and Adm. Mc Gregor (F.O.L.I., headquartered in Taranto) "an amendment" with Adm. Cunningham - de Courten Agreement of 23 September. The amendment, requested by the Allied Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean, contained exceptionally cautious clauses imposed by the United Nations and was thus conceived:

"The Cunningham - Courten Agreement is hereby amended as follows:

1. The following sentence is added to the preamble: "It is understood and agreed that the provisions of this Agreement relating to the immediate use and the provisions relating to Italian warships and merchant ships does not alter the United Nations right to take such other provisions, relating to all or part of

Italian ships, which they may consider appropriate. Their decisions on this matter will be reported to the Italian Government from time to time. "

2. The last sentence of the last paragraph shall be amended as follows: "They shall be manned as far as possible with Italian crews provided by the Italian Navy Ministry and shall be under the Italian flag".

3. This Agreement is drawn up in English and in Italian, the English text being the authentic one, and - in the event of any dispute over its interpretation - will prevail over the Allied Control Commission decision. Signed in Brindisi on 17 November 1943.

Admiral  
R. DE COURTEN  
Minister of the Navy

For the Commander in Chief  
Allied Naval Forces  
in the Mediterranean  
R. McGREGOR  
Rear Admiral

Flag Officer Liaison, Italy".

Adm. De Courten, just signed the amendment, issued a statement to the Head of the Government Maresciallo Badoglio on the same day, 17 November 1943:

"In obedience to S. E. [His Excellency] Maresciallo Badoglio, Head of Government, I signed the additional clauses in the preamble and the last paragraph of the Cunningham - Courten Agreement, requested by Allied Governments as conditions for signing amendments to the Armistice Act.

"In making that signature, I ask that the following statement be taken into account:

"I feel it is my duty to make it clear that the request for the inclusion of these clauses, which took place less than two months after the meeting with Sir Andrew Cunningham, then Commander in Chief of the Allied Fleet in the Mediterranean, altered the spirit of the agreement concluded between Adm. Cunningham and me. The terms of this Agreement were proposed, under armistice, by Admiral Cunningham, who had invited me to examine them and to communicate my comments and considerations. Since full agreement had been reached on the text submitted by the ally, and since the Agreement had so far the widest and most complete application without any contrast, either in the letter or in the spirit, I had no reason to think that it should be



amended and supplemented by a further clause of caution. This clause appears to be antithesis with the active collaboration, given so far by the Italian Navy, and with the clear demonstration of the loyal disposition of the Italian fleet to intensify to the maximum extent its contribution to the conduct of the war against the common enemy in the cobelligerance in action.

Brindisi, on November 17, 1943.

Adm. R. DE COURTEN  
Minister of the Navy. "

The amendment was - today it can be said - a first symptom of the severe treatment that was reserved for us in the peace treaty imposed on the United Nations on February 10, 1947 by the political class governed by it, which our government called "Decree" in a statement to the Nation of 22 December 1951, in which he reported the complete decadence of the Decree regarding the limitations to the free renewal and development of the Armed Forces.



## PART II

### THE CO-BELLIGERENCY

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE START OF THE CO-BELLIGERENCY ACTIVITY

The co-belligerency activity carried out by the Navy does not record episodes of particular resonance, since there no longer existed in the Mediterranean, after October 13, 1943, a powerful and organized military navy, against which to fight the Allies.

It was a continuation of warfare, which involved men and means with a low intensity but who did not test their combat capacity, as it had been before the armistice. Exceptions are special missions dedicated to light and very light ships (submarines, torpedoes, motor torpedo boats and Mas) and those entrusted to the assault vehicles, as well as the activity of the "San Marco" regiment, reconstituted and incorporated into the Italian Corps of Liberation.

Therefore - after the synthesis, to which this Chapter is devoted - will be examined and narrated only the events of particular importance.

#### 32<sup>nd</sup> TWO IMPORTANT SPEECHES OF MINISTER DE COURTEN.

It is useful to put forward the text of two speeches made by the Minister de Courten - the first in front of all the officers present at Taranto, gathered in the great hall of the Navy Club, and the second to the Admirals and Captain of the vessel gathered at the headquarters of the Command in Chief of the Department - because they give the exact feeling of the spirit that animated the Navy after the declaration of war on Germany. The first speech is October 14, 1943, that of the first officially recognized the co-belligerency, and the second is November 8, 1943.

#### *The 1<sup>st</sup> Speech (October 14<sup>th</sup> 1943)*

I had some time in the heart the desire to reunite, but the course of events did not give me a chance first

to do so. Today, when Italy declared war on Germany, I want to talk to you to clarify some obscure point in answering some of your questions that your consciences have come as a logical consequence of such a marked evolution of orientations and facts.

Moreover, this waiting period will not be useless because it will give each of you the opportunity to examine and meditate on its own the problems of all kinds that have accompanied this crisis, which has exerted and exercised profound influence on our Country and on our Navy.

Many of you have already found the answer to these question marks, but it is possible that in some more emotional souls there is still some doubt, some wavering.

To clarify the moral justification of the line of conduct followed by Italy, I shall briefly explain the facts that have led to the armistice of Anglo - American and the declaration of war on Germany.

The situation created in our country at the end of August was such that Italy was not in any material condition to continue the war that she had led for 39 months, concentrating and exhausting all its military resources. Road and rail lines interrupted and paralyzed; Prevented the influx of war materials to the front of combat, food supplies to troops and civilian populations, raw materials to industries; Industrial paralysis due to lack of raw materials and over saturation of the warehouses of finished products it was creating a serious social crisis: Germany added to that by progressively reducing coal, oil, fuel, and grain to zero. The moment of collapse was approaching irreparably.

It is a duty and right of a belligerent to lay down the weapons when all the possibilities of defending themselves are exhausted and the country threatens to plunge into an irreparable ruin.

A people resort to war to resolve issues that were not solved by law. But when all efforts, exhausted by any resource (without examining the responsibilities of this conclusion), prove that even the use of force does not make the desired solution to national problems, it is obvious that those who have a responsibility for the future of a nation he has the sacrosanct duty of ending hostilities and returning to legal methods.

The request and the conclusion of the armistice by Italy are thus fully justified, they respond to the most demanding moral and can not be challenged by anyone, albeit allied.

Regarding the armistice, I have to point out that it was negotiated and that, despite its formal appearance, it did not pay for an unconditional return, which would not have allowed further developments, especially you, Navy Officers witnesses.

Negotiations were carried out in greater secrecy. I show you the facts that I will quote you.

At 07:00 on September 8<sup>th</sup>, having received the first information about the Anglo - American landing operations in progress in the Gulf of Salerno, I had ordered the Fleet to be ready to move for 14:00 to counter the Anglo - American naval forces of coverage; So it was expected that on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> there would have been the collision between the contingent naval forces, for which the Italian and German Aeronautics had been asked for the proposed fighter aircraft assistance.

At 18:30 on 8th September Gen. Eisenhower communicated by radio the conclusion of the armistice that appeared to be a surprise for everyone.

At 20:30 on September 8, I had the opportunity to know for the first time the clauses of the armistice.

Indeed, the Anglo - American armistice was communicated four or five days before the date provided by those whom the armistice had requested. It has been very much debated whether this early publication of the armistice, which the Anglo - American wanted against the Italian opinion, was appropriate and whether a more scrupulous observance of the agreements over the date would not have given any greater advantages of a general and particular character. Today, in fact, it seems to me that the acceleration of times by Anglo-Americans has brought more advantages than disadvantages, because there are many symptoms attesting that the Germans, apparently aware of the secret agreements, would have the same day overthrown and captured the Italian government, preventing it from exercising its functions within the framework of the armistice's application.

Faced with the event, manifested with all the characters of the surprise, there were two ways that were proposed in regard to the Italian Navy; Stick to the clauses of the armistice, which are

provided for the transfer of the fleet to ports controlled by Anglo - Americans, or to scuttle ships in port or at sea.

Everything had been set for a possible scuttling and I would have been very easy to give the executive order.

In the shortest time possible to make a decision, I solicited the two solutions and came to the resolution to adhere to the terms of the armistice.

The decisive consideration was that the armistice, publicly announced, had come into force so that failure to comply with its provisions would constitute a voluntary breach of an agreement that we required and solemnly accepted; The Anglo-Americans would have accused us of unfairness, losing any confidence in us, and they would have the power to immediately denounce the armistice.

The scuttling of the fleet, however, did nothing but worsen further the fate of our country, removing the only solid element of power it possessed, exposing it to very serious dangers by both the Germans and the Anglo – American

I was comforted, in strengthening my resolution, on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> by Grande Admiral Revel who, at the end of it, said to me, "Admiral, this is the way to go," and I was also comforted by the phone interview with the Adm. Bergamini, who from La Spezia assured me that the entire fleet was ready to execute disciplinedly any order to be imparted.

Such insurance came from a man like an Adm. Bergamini, who was highly influenced by his sense of self-denial, by his fighting spirit, and by his ability to assume every major responsibility. A man like Him could not close his noble existence if he did not disappear with his own flagship, sank on the afternoon of September 9 after the German air attack.

You all know how the events have been carried out with regard to the Navy. Those amongst you who come from Malta or Alexandria know with what discipline and firmness all the ships have performed all the orders received: they have had the most sought after reward in the high word of praise and gratitude of His Majesty the King.



I can assure you that the magnificent behavior of the Italian Navy in the war and its disciplined and dignified attitude after the armistice have also been appreciated by those who have been our enemies for 39 months.

Adm. Cunningham, with whom I would talk at Taranto, and to express my admiration for the perfect discipline with which Italian ships had entered the ports controlled by the Anglo - Americans, showed me appreciation for how to fight our cruisers , Which the British themselves had been able to see, and asked for the collaboration of our escort ships, which they knew by experience of the way they did their escort service to our convoys.

As for the declaration of war on Germany, it is equally justified and moral, as was the demand for armistice. Faced with an act imposed by the necessity of war developments and concerns over the future of our people, the Germans have turned against us a violent and wicked act, which finds no justification in actual military requirements. Towns and homes are destroyed, populations pillaged and stripped, civilian life subjected to brutal anger. The news that comes from the parts of Italy under the control of the Germans are in agreement to emphasize the fierce and persecutory character of German action and the violence of the anti-Germanic spirit aroused in the minds of the Italians. Under these conditions, it was evident that the Germans manifest hostilities were the only possible answer: the war declaration, which officially sanctions an existing state of affairs.

I hope these words have clarified any doubt, and eliminated any case of conscience that might have disturbed you.

But if there was someone in your midst who was not yet convinced of the perfect morality of our attitudes, I can not renew to him the suggestion already given through the dependant commands. I will do nothing to keep them among us. I advise them to give a good pair of shoes, to take a valley and to head towards that area that, rather than a combat front, is the ideal line that separates the Italy of His Majesty the King from the republican.

The other spiritual crisis, which certainly affects many of you, is represented by the distance of your families and the uncertainty of their fate.

In this field we all find ourselves in the same conditions; I also left my wife and children there, but - under the order of the Head of Government to leave everything and to reach my duty - I did not hesitate for a moment. What can I tell you? We must have faith and patience, and trust that Providence always protects our loved ones, remaining far from us.

And now let's talk about the future.

Those who worked with me know perfectly how you think.

No recrimination, no criticism can Today be tolerated.

There is latent in us Latin to criticize: all this has to cease.

If I become aware that in the arena of a ship or in a club, or at any meeting, we are talking about criticizing events and men, especially those who currently hold the fate of the Government, I would not hesitate to take the most serious measures.

Never as at this moment it is necessary for everyone to think only of fulfilling their duty, working hard within their functions; the hours of the day will never be too many because each of you, dedicating with passion and abnegation to your duties, gives a real contribution to the efficiency of our ships, our Navy. And if you have some freedom in the day, each of you official approaches people, talk to people, get in touch with people. Crews now need more than ever to feel close to their officers: they do not have those spiritual resources that can come from culture, and they need to be helped, sustained. It is one of your highest duties.

Destiny wanted to put a weight upon my shoulders, which I did not seek and which I had never thought of: as is my uniform, I try to carry it with a serene spirit and with total faith. But you have to give me your consent, that which I am sure; indeed very certain. And because this consensus does not undergo the influence of environmental conditions and changing circumstances, it must be rooted in sincere and deep conviction.

Any false or equivocal attitude would be a stab in the back of those who work for the enhancement of our Navy, our Armed Forces, and the reconstruction of our country, which crosses its most grave historical crisis.

We are here a handful of men, far from our homes, from our loved ones; but we are united by the same great ideal, for which we struggle with energy, with tenacity, with passion. We must win and we will win.

Perhaps now you can not understand everything; but one day when you have white hair, talking to your children and grandchildren, you can say proudly that in 1943, with your action, you saved Italy.

2<sup>nd</sup> Address (November 8, 1943)

About three weeks ago on October 14th, I thought it appropriate to gather the officers who were present in Taranto, and to present them some considerations which were meant to clarify, in the eyes of everyone, what was the situation that had come from the day of the armistice, and thus contribute to the elimination of any crisis that might have tarnished the consciences of these officers

In concluding my words, I told them that they should have avoided criticism with each and every one, to avoid being left behind by moods of depression; And that their precise duty was solely to devote all their energies to work, so that the Navy, which already has so many benefits to its activity, could always be a granite block of forces designed to secure the good of the Motherland.

In saying these words, I had perfectly clarified before my mind the development of the events that would have been produced in the course of time: it was not possible to clearly and definitively indicate what complications such as new crises could have arisen and could be susceptible to disturb you and your lower minds; But I knew that a labor, like what we are going through, can not and could not come to an end, except through disruption or oscillation, which for the time being are still not serious, but that could become so in the future.

My words had a specific purpose: to point out to everyone, in the only form I was granted, that whatever could happen in the times that followed, the duty was only one: to work and think to keep the Navy intact.

I unhappily regretted that, in recent times, again, in the masses of the officers, they have been disturbed by moods, which have left me a little puzzled, because they have made me I doubt that my words were not clear enough. That's why I begged you to come here: and I invited you, Admirals, Captain of the Vessel and other ranks because there are things I can not tell everyone but that I want to be brought to your knowledge to draw a precise norm for the conduct of men who are entrusted to you. The causes of this perturbation, which has perhaps touched you, but certainly many of your inferior ones, are well known. They originate from a series of news, none of which is official in nature and come from a propaganda that has nothing to do with the National Government propaganda.

I understand perfectly that you, thinking like any citizen of the future of the country, remain shaken, disturbed when you hear on the radio or read news stories, rumors that can hurt your feelings, in what they have most, high, more Noble, more generous: the feeling of attachment to the Monarchy.

However, I must draw your attention to two general facts on which your inferior ones are well illumined.

The first is this: one of the first acts of the Government of Marshal Badoglio, an act that could not be transformed into law because the rapid evolution of events prevented the series of formalities that are necessary to translate a will in formal act, established that Armed Forces officers should not belong to any political party.

This claim existed in the past in the rules of discipline and it was necessary to call it in force.

This statement means that none of you, none of yours. Especially in delicate moments like the present one, to engage in discussions of a political nature must not be drawn from the desire to comment, evaluate, criticize the numerous manifestations that fall within the field of political contradictions and that are beyond the scope of your sacrosanct duties: duties that are summed up in obedience to the oath that is given. And it does not seem that what I ask you may be in contradiction with the fact that such manifestations also turn against the very essence of the oath: no, your duty is to obey H. M. the King, and you must not think of replacing in anyway

His Majesty, judging events, acts, people whom He, in His high wisdom, is perfectly able to know and to evaluate.

The other fact of general nature is this. We are in a state of freedom: freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of all. It is clear that under these conditions we, who for 21 years have lost their habit to these forms of freedom when we hear a radio voice, or we read a poster or newspaper, or we hear speeches that are in conflict with our feelings, we feel an impression of despondency.

In this field, especially in the troubled phase that we are going through and gone through, we will hear and see each other. During this time, ambitions and passions will arise, which can create disagreements between us: we are just in the beginning ... We must be brave against such manifestations; We must also admit that at this stage everyone will have the right to say what he wants in our regard, wounding in our affections, in our pride, in our ideals,

It is therefore necessary that everyone is convinced of the need to not trust the voices and have the strength to let them slide over them as a matter of matter without being touched.

In the particular case that has motivated and justified your disturbance, I say justified because I too, who are familiar with many things, at some point I was puzzled, I can assure you that news, newspaper campaigns, radio propaganda broadcasts have absolutely no foundation. These are manifestations of small, men who represent small things and who can not exert any influence on the real course of events.

When yesterday I mentioned to Marshal Badoglio the impression that these voices had aroused in our naval officers, he told me: "But a government can not officially deny all and nonsense that can be said or written about us".

The best demonstration of the integrity of these voices is in the concrete and positive fact that H. M. the King continues to perform his very high functions quietly, serenely, with the tranquility and serenity that I would like to see for trust and faith.

I can also tell you that the Anglo - Americans with their attitude have shown and demonstrate having deeper confidence

in the great wisdom of His Majesty, and have repeatedly affirmed, in the most diverse ways, that they will support any Government, to which His Majesty will deem appropriate to entrust to the destiny of the country.

All this I wanted to tell you, because you must be the propagators of truth to the detriment of controversy.

Your task of men's conductors is becoming ever more delicate as the situation evolves. We are at the beginning of this crisis: with the progressive advancement of the Anglo-American troops, to which a unit of Italian troops (1) will be added tomorrow, the reconquest of our land will bring in areas in which political passions are more lively, and in which the longest torment, the greatest sufferings have inevitably created more uncertain moods. Therefore, whatever circumstances may occur in the future, you should always keep your officers on what their line should be, namely: fidelity to the institutions, but also abstraction from any form of political controversy, any criticism in this tangle of passions and mixed feelings.

You know me enough to know that I do not say what I think, so you can be sure that my words exactly reflect the truth. Be assured that in the historical evolution that is ahead of us at some point, there would be some situations where I felt that the assignments were irreconcilable with the oath given, I would be the first to tell you: look at the situation in these terms, I adjust this way, you adjust according to your conscience.

You can have more secure faith that I will never miss my duty to ring the alarm bell, if that is necessary. But you have to help me, you do not have to put me in the need to repeat what I have said to you: keep in mind that the words I say to you are well thought out and weighted in my soul ... try to meditate and draw the necessary deductions for your standard and as a rule of all the officers you depend on.

### 33<sup>rd</sup> INITIAL AND FINAL SITUATIONS OF NAVY.

By limiting ourselves to ships with offensive capabilities in the event of encounter with the enemy, the initial and final

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(1) On September 27, 1943, the Italian 1<sup>st</sup> motorized grouping was established in Puglia, which entered the line in November and that on 10 April 1944 it was named the "Italian Corps of Liberation" (C.I.L.).

the ships in service appear from the following prospectus (which excludes the ships belonging to the formerly adversary Navy, which have been returned as soon as possible):

Types of Ship	Situation on 9/8/43		Ships lost after 9/8/43		Situation at the end of the war	
	N.	Tons	N.	Tons	N.	Tons
Battleships	7	199,488	2	58,622	5	140,866
Cruisers	13	80,065	4	26,432	9	53,633
Destroyers	22	33,732	11	15,997	11	17,735
Torpedo Boats	31	20,975	16	11,356	15	9,619
TB for escort	14	12,110	7	6,055	7	6,055
Corvette	26	14,690	7	3,955	19	10,735
Submarines	57	38,387	21	14,960	36	23,427
MTB	30	1,800	15	900	15	900'
Mas	61	1,250	34	650	27	600
	261	402,497	117	138,927	144	263,570

Here are the causes of the ship losses from September 8, 1943 to April 25, 1945:

Battleships: 1 (*Roma*) sunk by German air action on September 9, 1943,

1 (*Cavour*) captured on the slipway, being in great work of repair, on September 10, 1943.

Cruisers: 1 (*Taranto*) scuttled in port on 9 September 1943,

3 (*Bolzano, Gorizia, Bari*) sabotaged and abandoned, being in major repairs, on September 9, 1943.

Destroyers: 3 scuttled in harbor on September 9, 1943,

3 sunk in combat between 9 and 11 September 1943,

1 sank in harbor by aircraft on October 10, 1943,

4 captured after being sabotaged in port or on site for repairs, September 9, 1943.

Torpedo Boats: 3 scuttled in harbor on September 9, 1943, 10 captured after being sabotaged in port or on site for repairs between 9 and 12 September 1943

2 sunk by German aerial action on 24 and 25 September 1943,

1 sunk by German aerial action on September 27, 1943.

TB foe escort: 2 scuttled in harbor on September 9, 1943,

2 scuttled off the coast on September 11, 1943,

1 was captured in the harbor after being sabotaged on September 10, 1943,

2 captured in port, being sabotaged, on September 16, 1943.

Corvette: 1 sank in combat on September 9, 1943,

2 scuttled in the arsenal on September 9, 1943,

3 captured on site while under repair, September 9, 1943,

1 was captured in port after being sabotaged on September 11, 1943.

Submarines: 7 scuttled in port or on the slipways on September 9, 1943,

7 captured in port or on the slipways after being sabotaged between 9 and 11 September 1943,

1 captured the harbor on September 12, 1943,

2 scuttled off the coast on September 12, 1943,

1 sunk on the high seas, from a justified error, by Allied aircraft on September 12, 1943,

1 was captured in port on September 14, 1943,

1 sunk on the rocks, where he had been stranded during a special mission, on the night of December 29, 1943,

1 sank in the Atlantic for collision with the American DD that escorted it to Bermuda on November 15, 1943.

MTB: 2 scuttled in port on September 9, 1943,

7 captured in port between 10 and 12 September 1943,

2 sunk in navigation in the Aegean by a German air strike, November 18, 1943,

1 sunk by a mine, returning from a special mission, on September 25, 1943,

1 lost by accident during a mission of ambush on 9 October 1943 (coast of Lero),



- 1 sank in harbor at Lero by a German air attack on October 26, 1943,
- 1 sank during a special mission on November 3, 1943.
- Mas: 4 scuttled in port on September 9, 1943,
- 17 captured in port from 9 to 12 September 1943,
- 1 captured in port on September 16, 1943,
- 1 delivered to the Germans in the Aegean by the crew during a mission on 18 September 1943 (Mas 522),
- 1 sunk at a port for a German air attack on September 26, 1943,
- 2 scuttled in combat at Lero on November 12 and 13, 1943,
- 1 exploded on a mine during a special mission on February 21, 1944,
- 1 lost with staff and goods during a Special Mission on March 22, 1944,
- 1 delivered to the Germans by the crew mutiny during a mission on April 10, 1944 (Mas 505),
- 2 lost in the harbor on August 12, 1944, stricken for inefficiency in December 1943,
- 2 stricken for inefficiency in December 1944,

Of the ships the Germans managed to capture, changing their name, without sometimes having time to sabotage, were in part used with German flag and personnel and in part yielded to the Fascist Social Republic. These ships, at the end of the conflict, were found abandoned in ports or bases of the North except for the following that were sunk into combat against allied ships; or by - standing in port - for Allied Air Attack:

DD: 3 for air strikes (*Turbine* at Salamina, 1 September 15, 1944, *Crispi* in Piraeus on October 12, 1944, *Pigafetta* in Trieste on February 17, 1945).

TB: 3 for air strikes (*Castelfidardo* in Iraklion on June 2, 1944; *Dezza* at Quarnaro on August 20, 1944; *San Martino* in Piraeus on October 12, 1944,

1 for Greek submarine torpedo (*Calatafimi* off Samos on 9 August 1944),

2 in combat against two English DD (*Solferino* off of Volo on 19 October 1944; *Audace* at Pago on November 1, 1944)

TB for escort: 1 by air strike (*Insidioso* at Flume in March 1944, or at Porer in Istria in August 1944)

1 by bumping into a mine (*Impavido* off Caprera on April 25, 1944)

1 in combat against two English DD (*Ardito* in the Gulf of Genoa on June 15, 1944).

Corvette: 1 in combat against allied ships (*Camoscio* off Toulon in August 1944)

Submarines: 3 by air attack (*Nautilo* in Pola on January 9, 1944; *Bagnolini* in the waters of the Cape of Good Hope on March 11, 1944; *Beilul* in Monfalcone in May 1944)

1 for English submarine torpedoes (*Giuliani* in the Channel of Malacca on February 14, 1944).

MTB: (not apparently employed by Nazi-fascists).

Mas: 1 by airplane (Mas 522 in spring or summer 1944)

1 by an English DD (Mas 504 in front of Anzio on April 25, 1944)

1 by four American MTBs (Mas 562 in Portoferraio on June 29, 1944: burnt down, abandoned and captured by the Americans, who handed it back to the legitimate Navy on July 12, 1944),

1 by French ships (Mas 531 off Provence on 11 December 1944)

According to a statement by Minister de Courten to the Council of Ministers on March 16, 1944, they were then in service:

5 Battleships in two divisions

8 cruisers in two divisions

8 destroyers

21 torpedo boats

19 corvette

37 submerged, in various Groups under a single command

14 MTB

15 Mas.

} In various squadrons assembled  
in only one command

34<sup>th</sup> USE OF NAVAL SHIPS.

The Minister's announcement, now quoted, continued with the indication of the co-belligerence activities carried out by the Navy.

We quote the Minister's words.

"Among the forces of the Navy operating in the war against Germany, in addition to most of the aforementioned naval forces, all the land and sea defense works of the sea front of liberated territory, the "San Marco" regiment and the Organization of assault vehicles ...

"For the use of ships, for the use of works and means we were facilitated by the a considerable number of officers, non-commissioned officers and men of C.R.E.M. who were already in the controlled area, or who have reached it with the naval forces or with their own risk and initiative. The latter, who have surpassed the enemy lines, summon 700 officers between actual and recalled and over 2000 men from C.R.E.M.

"At present there are about 1450 officers in the s.p.e., corresponding to 36.4% of all s.p.e. officers, who were in service of the Navy on the armistice, and about 3350 recalled, corresponding to 32.5% of all Officers recalled in service to the Navy at the Armistice. The current strength of the C.R.E.M. under arms of about 76,000 soldiers, of which 31,500 embarked, 18,400 on land in warlike destinations (batteries, sighting networks, barriers, obstructions) and the remaining services.

"This force seems sufficient to the current needs of the Navy, which has allowed the recapture of personnel in particular age, family and working conditions: the returnees have reached the size of 520 officers, 9300 men of C.R.E.M. and 2000 men from C.R.A.M. (1). Such discharges mostly concern individuals of the Navy who are resident in the controlled area, but have also been extended to those who, while residing in Italy, have been able to prove that they have the opportunity to occupy and work in liberated Italy ...

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(1) It was the beginning of the Royal Corps of Maritime Artillery, a new institution in place of the suppressed Maritime Militia which was of Fascist origin. At war ended, in the new reorganization of the Navy; the C.R.A.M. had been eliminated.

"The location of our naval forces is currently the following:

- Battleships *Italia* and *Vittorio Veneto* are in the Gran Lago Amaro with small crews;
- Battleships *Duilio*, *Doria* and *Caesar* are in Malta with small crews;
- Cruisers *Abruzzi*, *Garibaldi* and *Aosta* undergoing work in Freetown for fighting German submarines in the South Atlantic;
- Cruiser *Eugenio di Savoia* has spent many months in Suez for training of American bombers and torpedo aircraft;
- Cruisers *Montecuccoli*, *Pompeo Magno*, *Scipione Africano* and *Cadorna* effecting the transport too many national and allied troops between North Africa and Italy and between Sardinia and Italy.

"The destroyers, torpedo boats and corvettes have main location in Taranto with stations in Augusta, Brindisi, Naples, Palermo, Cagliari, La Maddalena, for the Mediterranean escort of Anglo-American and national convoys.

"Submarines have main location in Taranto and other smaller ports of controlled Italy, with stations in Caifa (3 units), Malta (2 units) and Bermuda (5 units) with normal operational and training use and with special missions. It is anticipated the upcoming submissions of submarines to Freetown and a further three to Colombo, which will be backed by the ship *Eritrea*, which at the time of the armistice reached Ceylon from Singapore breaking the enemies blockade for the second time during the war.

"MTB and Mas have main operational stations in the Partenope Islands, La Maddalena and the Adriatic, with the task of assisting for troops operating on the flanks of the Italian fronts and for special missions.

"During the period from September 8, 1943 to February 29, 1944, Italian naval forces carried out intensive sea activities, characterized by these eloquent figures:

- 427 transfers for a total of 181,582 miles;
- War missions in the number of 231 for 102.011 miles;
- In addition to these missions cruisers, destroyers, torpedoes boats and corvettes and various ships, they carried out 80 missions for Italian troops and materials, traveling 28,597 miles and carrying a total of 98,000 Italian soldiers, and escorted 56 Italian steamships for a total of 19,005 miles;

- but the greatest escort work was done for the 176 Anglo-American convoys, during which destroyers, torpedo boats and corvettes escorted the United Nations, for a total of 2544 steamships, corresponding to tons of Gross tonnage 21,318,300, traveling through the 53,616 convoys miles and over 156,000 escort miles;

- Cruisers, destroyers, and corvettes also carried out 29 missions for fast transportation of Anglo-American troops and materials, covering 21,000 miles and carrying 9132 United Nations soldiers.

"The total movements of the Navy units from 8 September 1943 to 29 February 1944 were 1315 for a total of 508,490 miles."

So done the point of the Navy's activity on February 1944 through the Minister's word, let me see it as a whole for all the 20 months of the struggle for liberation.

*Naval activity.*

*War missions.* Within this heading, we mean assigned missions aimed at preventing or countering enemy initiatives in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic.

In the Mediterranean, it was involved in the occupations of Aegean and Ionian islands, carrying out coastal bombings, recovering men flowing to the Adriatic coast of Balcania, and so on. These missions totaled 197 for a total of 38,935 miles. There were 32 ships of various types (destroyers, torpedo boats, corvette, sailboats, Mas, auxiliary ships).

In the Atlantic, at the request of the Allies, were based in Freetown, the cruisers from the 8<sup>th</sup> Division. The purpose of this use of our three most important cruisers (*Duca degli Abruzzi*, *Garibaldi* and *Duca d'Aosta*) was to alternate in long search and hunting cruises of any German corsair with similar British and French ships. The 8<sup>th</sup> Division was moved to Freetown from mid-November 1943 to the end of March 1944, carrying out 12 cruises, as long as it was estimated by the Allied Authorities that there was a likelihood of the presence of corsair ships in the Atlantic. Miles traveled by cruisers during these cruises were in total 39,534.

*Special missions.* These missions are detailed in the next chapter. Here it is enough to say that they were 335, with the participation of 394 ships for a total of 95,700 miles.

*Convoy escort.* They took part in this type of missions destroyers, torpedo boats, corvette, auxiliary ships. 1525 convoys were escorted, of which 1295 were allies and 230 nationals, with a total of 2997 ships and 812,000 miles.

The escorted steamers were 10,496, of which 10,232 allies and 264 nationals, totaling 86.8 million tons of gross tonnage.

Escort missions were carried out mainly on routes from North Africa and Malta ports to the Italian ports of the peninsula and major islands, and vice versa.

The Italian ships had been entrusted with the escort of almost all of the Allied convoys carrying supplies and materials on the routes from North Africa and Malta to the continental and island Italian ports.

It should be noted that the total number of convoy escorted was about half that of the escort ships, because the latter evolved around the ships to be protected in order to better protect them from submarine ambush.

*Anti-submarine activity.* Anti-submarine vigilance and hunting were normally intended for MTBs. Mas, Vas and a small tonnage auxiliary units, which made a total of 2931 missions totaling 253,830 miles.

The areas where these missions were conducted were essentially those in front of the ports and bases, where traffic-borne routes were concentrated - for reasons of convergence.

*Transportation of personnel and follow on material.* To make faster and safer the transport of men and materials in their equipment were used:

- Cruisers (423 trips) (1),
- DD (259 trips),
- Torpedo Boats (64 trips),
- Corvette (32 trips),
- Submarines (5 trips),
- Landing Craft (685 trips).

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(1) *Scipio Africano* 102; *Montecuccoli* 80; *Abruzzi* 77; *Pompeo Magno* 71; *Aosta* 58; *Garibaldi* 26; *Cadorna* 9.

In these 1468 trips were made across the Mediterranean and from Sardinia to the continent 317,428 men and 356,000 tons of materials. The total route can be estimated at 430,000 miles.

The far greater part of the contingent of men and materials was transported, by cruisers and DDs, who - in addition to a larger boarding capability - made 682 trips, or just under half of the total.

*Missions for training purposes.* The assistance for aeronautical training was given:

- in the western Mediterranean by 2 submarines;
- in the central Mediterranean 2 DD, 3 torpedo boats, 10 submarines;
- in the Eastern Mediterranean by 1 Ct, 7 submarines;
- in the Red Sea by 1 DD and 1 Submarine (sometimes also by 1 Cruiser);
- In the Atlantic, based in Bermuda, 8 submarines;
- in the Indian Ocean 1 DD, Colonial Ship (*Eritrea*), 2 submarines

These figures represent average values of the number of ships each month available, to the Allies for training purposes of their ships and their aircraft.

In total, 1933 missions totaling 123,425 miles.

Italian ships have also carried out 1618 training exercises to improve their combat efficiency, covering 96,320 miles.

*Various missions.* These, having different purposes (personality transport, search for and rescue of the shipwrecked, reconnaissance in scope for various tests after periods of work for repairs, etc.) were 545 for a total of 52,112 miles by warships And 24,049 for auxiliary ships for a total estimated at 800,000 miles.

*Transfers.* These were many, and due to the need to move ships from one base to another, both to bring them closer to the operational theater from time to time assigned to them, or to reach a location for repair work.

There were 5645 transfers for a total of about 1,100,000 miles.

*Minesweeping.* This service, which is vital to the safety of navigation in mines, was used by average 60 ship (partly military: and partly auxiliary), to sweep about fifty routes with a frequency varying from one to three times a week.

The number of outings in the sea for minesweeping was 13,140, except for errors due to the fact that it was in practice a continuous come and go.

A reliable calculation of the number of miles traveled by minesweepers is extremely difficult due to the difficulty of computing (for nautical and technical reasons) by the commanders of the same minesweeping ship. However, it can be estimated that the milestones for minesweeping have been in the order of magnitude of 500,000.

*Ship Movements in localities.* This type of performance can not be "quantified" as it is continuous movement within the bases and ports and adjacent waters of tugboats, small tonnage tankers, floating pontoon, platforms floating for the most diverse purposes of Assistance and supply of ships. It may well be considered that it was roughly the case of over 10,000 movements for a route that can be estimated at 150,000 miles.

*Assault craft.* As the assault means can not be considered as "navy", we include them in this synthetic review because they were mobile vehicles that used naval ships to approach the ports where their targets were.

For the transportation and support of the assault means, the DD *Grecale* and Ms 74-

The assault vehicles carried out various missions, including two forces of ports occupied by the Germans: on June 21, 1944 in La Spezia, sinking the cruiser *Bolzano*, which was undergoing major repairs and damaged a submarine; On April 19, 1945, in Genoa, attacking with positive results the aircraft carrier *Aquila*, that was under construction (1).

These two successful operations were preceded by a planned incursion into the South Bay, towards the end of January 1944,

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(1) For details of these two brilliant operations, see Volume XIV "The Assault Means" of this same series.



at the request of American Admiral Ziroli (resident in Taranto) on behalf of F.O.T.A.L.I.

The raid was to be carried out by three explosive motorboats (such as the successful one on the same bay on March 26, 1941), starting in Tobruk with dd *Granatiere*, who had moved from Taranto with the assault vehicles aboard, departing Tobruk in the afternoon of January 21, 1944.

After a week of waiting for the favorable conditions, the action was canceled and the DD returned to Taranto on the morning of February 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### SUMMARY OF THE SHIPS ACTIVITY

<i>Types of missions</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Miles Traveled</i>
War missions	209	94,788
Special Missions	335	95,700
Escorted riders	1,525	812,000
Anti-submerged activity	2,931	253,830
Military transport	1,468	430,000
Training	3,551	219,745
Various Missions	24,594	852,112
Transfers	5,645	1,110,000
Tug	13,140	500,000
Local services	over 10,000	150,000
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Total	63,398	4,518,175

The total distance equals 209 times the length of the equator.

Following this activity which ended on May 8, 1945, the Navy continued during a second armistice period - that from May 8, 1945 (the end of the war in Europe) came to the Diktat's signature on 10 February 1947 - to collaborate with the Allies.

During this period, two were the main forms of collaboration on the sea: the transport of Italian prisoners from Africa and the Middle East to Italy, and the transfer to the European continent of allied troops in the same areas; Intensive minesweeping to clear the Italian seas of all the mines left in the mined fields,

after the minesweeping carried out during the hostilities only on routes that interested to keep clear of danger.

According to the computation carried out by the State Statistics Office, until February 10, 1947, these other missions were grouped under four titles:

Types of missions	Number	Miles sailed
Military transport	22,659	1,927,114
Various missions	15,516	1,041,398
Transfers	3,777	337,512
Minesweeping	2,527	734,927
<hr/> Total 54,479		4,040,951

447,909 men and 1,420,718 tons of materials were transported.

During the minesweeping - which was continued for some years yet - 500 mines were stranded on the coasts, 2178 mines dredged, 2371 drifting mines, 2921 explosive ordnance of various types, and 369 anti-sweeping buoys were eliminated.

### 35<sup>th</sup> NAVAL OPERATING COMMANDS.

To direct all naval activities, the following Naval Commands were established in order of time:

- The Light Cruiser and DDs of the Fleet Command Group, with the flag on the *Scipione Africano* (capt. vasc. [Captain] Franco Garofalo), set up on October 6, 1943.

This Command was dissolved on February 1, 1944: the three CLs *Scipio*, *Regolo* and *Pompeo* went to the dependence of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division; the destroyers passed on to the dependence of the "Torpedoes", which assumed the name of the Supreme Commander of the Torpedoes.

- The Superior Command of Torpedoes and Corvette (Torpedoes) also set up on 6 October 1943 (Adm. Div. (Rear Adm.) Amedeo Nomis di Pollone, replaced by the equal ranking Cado Giartosio on 23 July 1944).

- The Submarine Command (Maricosom) established on October 10, 1943, held by a senior officer, from whom all

the boats in areas controlled by the legitimate government and the training school set up in Taranto (the head of Maricosom was cap. freg. [Commander] Giulio Chialamberto and, from October 14, 1944, cap. vasc. [Captain] Allhero Ginocchio). Location Taranto.

- The Naval Forces Training Inspectorate, set up in Taranto on October 24, 1943 (amm. sq. [Vice Adm.] Ferdinando di Savoia, Duke of Genoa).

- The Naval Group Command of Augusta (Grupnav Augusta), also set up on October 24, 1943 (cap. freg. [Commander] Francesco Murzi).

- The Command Group of Assault Vehicles (Mariassalto), which had its base in Taranto on the island of San Vito, constituted by cap. vasc. [Captain] Ernesto Forza ro command to reuse the assault vehicles that could flow from the north immediately after the armistice.

It included: Surface Department; Underwater unit; Gamma Department ("Pigs"); Technical and auxiliary services. It was then completed with the Palombari School established in San Vito and with the NP Unit (swimmers-paratroopers) of the San Marco Regiment, which we will discuss in paragraph 39.

Mariassalto attracted the attention of the Allied Naval Authorities, who had conceived an immense esteem for the wonderful accomplishments of those sea daredevils, which had never been able to penetrate the technical and operational secrets. So they wanted allied staff to be part of Mariassalto's organization and trained with our material and our methods to work together with our men.

- The Inspectorate General: of Mas and Means of Assault (Generalmas), reconstructed in Taranto on March 12, 1944 under the command of amm. sq. [Vice Adm.] Aimone di Savoia, Duke of Aosta.

This Inspectorate, already existing before September 8, 1943, it was felt the need to reconstitute to coordinate the activity of all insidious means (submarines and mines excluded): Motosiluranti, Mas, Vas, Assault vehicles. Mariassalto passed to his dependency together with the flotillas of motosiluranti [MTB], Mas, and Vas. Even the San Marco regiment was put under its dependence, except for employment, for those who took orders from the Commands of the Italian or Allied Grande Units operating on the land front which was assigned from time to time.

The Generalmas was dissolved on May 15, 1945, one week after the end of the war in Europe.

- The Superior Command of the Cruisers, which absorbed the two Commands of the 7<sup>th</sup> and of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division, set up in April 1944. The first holder was the amm. Div. [Rear Adm.] Romeo Oliva, replaced on 17 August 1944 by amm. div. [Rear Adm.] Emilio Ferreri. Flagship vessel *Eugenio di Savoia*.

- The Inspectorate of the Naval Forces, which in 1 August 1944 replaced the Naval Forces Training Inspectorate, which was in turn created the Command of the Command Battleship Naval Forces, abolished after the sinking of *Roma* which hosted it and in consequence of the factual break-up of the Naval Forces at the arrival of the ships in Malta (1).

- The Mas de Levante Group Command (Grupmas Levante), which should be kept to a certain extent because it arisen as a necessity determined by contingent events.

On October 13, 1943, Mas 540 came to Haifa from Rhodes, which had left three days after the proclamation of the armistice, thus avoiding being captured by the Germans (2).

On November 12, 1943, Ms. 11 arrived at Haifa, arriving from Lero, who left on November 2, under the command of the British authorities, operating alongside the heroic garrison of that island (2).

The British authorities in Haifa were interested in temporarily improving the two small units in order to allow them to be transferred to an Italian base. The Mas 540 needed adjustments to the axis line of one of the propellers; Ms 11 needed to reconstruct the structure because the heavily damaged bow; however, the work was not immediately started and, when it was, they were conducted with considerable slowness.

On February 29, 1944 came to Haifa, coming from Smyrna, the Mas 523 and 545. These ships, released from internment for the intervention of the British Government at the turkish, agree with our Naval Attaché in Turkey, they had taken refuge in Smyrna on November 16, 1943 at the time of the end of Lero's resistance.

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(1) The Naval Force Inspectorate came into operation after the return to Italy from Malta of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division (The *Doria* left Malta first on June 1, 1944 and reached Taranto on March 14, 1945 after a long stopping in Augsburg, the *Cesare*, departed Malta on June 17, 1944, was at Taranto on June 28, 1944, after a one-day stop in Augusta, the *Duilio* departed from Malta on 27 June 1944 and arrived in Taranto on July 6, 1944 after a 8 day stopover in Augusta.

(2) See Volume XVI, entitled "Avvenimenti in Egeo dopo l'armistizio".

After arriving in Haifa of the four Italian ships, the British authorities considered the opportunity to employ them in special missions to land Commandos in the Aegean Islands. So on April 24, 1944, the Mas of the Levante Group was formed, commanded by cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Mario Paolo Pollina, who works for the direct orders of the English.

On May 3, 1944, the Group was enriched by a fifth ship, the Mas 538, from Marmarice (Turkey) on the north coast of Rhodes, maned with a temporary crew sent from Haifa. The Mas 538 had also left Rhodes on September 19, 1943 as the Mas 540.

Decisions on the use of the Mas and formed the Group, the resumption of efficiency was continued with a new friction, providing the ships the most modern weaponry and completing the crews with personnel sent from Italy.

Grupmas Levante was also addicted to the organic-administrative part of Generalmas. It was dissolved on August 9, 1944, because it was found that the poor industrial equipment of Haifa did not allow the units to be returned in perfect efficiency. The four Mas returned to Italy, while the motosilurante remained in the Levant to the direct dependence of the Naval Superior Command of the Levant (which was established on October 16, 1943)

Returning to their homeland, the four Mas were grouped into a squadron, which was called "Mas Mitraglieri Squadron. (Mitramas), because of the powerful machine guns that the English had put in place, and their characteristic "Mas, followed by a progressive number", the MT was added.

- And since the Superior Command of the Levant was mentioned (cap. freg. [Commander] Carlo Liannazza, replaced in September 1944 by cap. freg. [Commander] Folco Bonamici), let's say which ships were to belong to him. The conventional denomination of this Command was "Maricosulev - Haifa" and had its dependence:

- the Submarine Group of the Levant (Levante Grupsom), commanded by the same commander as Maricosulev;

- the Levante Group (Levante Group) at the command of a lieutenant of the ship.

The Submarine Group had been constituted in the last decade of October with the transfer from Malta to Haifa - for agreements made by the Allies with Maristat - of the seven submarines *Atropo*, *Zoea*, *Menotti*, *Bragadino*, *Corridoni*, *Alagi* and *Galatea*.

Submarines were immediately employed for training English corvette in the Alexandria area and for running supplies to the Aegean islands where they were still fighting. With the fall of Lero, in mid-November, the Germans fought in the Aegean Islands, four submarines came back to Italy shortly thereafter.

As for Grupnav, it was formed following the inflow to Haifa of small auxiliary ships due to the capture at Rhodes and Lero, were:

Motorized Sail *Postiglione* (of the Guardia di Finanza, mobilized at the orders of the Navy),

Tug *Gaeta* (of the Navy),

Steamer *Aguglia*

Trawler *Garibaldino*

Trawler *Sant'Antonio*

Trawler *Navigatore*

} Requisitioned and militarized for service  
anti-sub and minesweeping.

In addition to these ships had left the Dodecanese the Tug *Impero* and steamer *Pola*, but were detained in Famagusta (Cyprus), where they performed activities on behalf of the local British Navy Command.

Subsequently, they were deployed to Haifa the steamer *Eolo* for traffic with Cyprus, the motorship *Lazzaro Mocenigo* (with functions of submarine support on which Marioosulev is standing), the steamers *Rubicone*, *Campidoglio*, *Abbazia*, *Lucia Cosulich* and the hospital ship *Toscana*: all ships used by the Allies.

Finally, the two Mz 722 and 729, which arrived at Port Said from the Aegean (Dodecanese), were put to Maricosulev's dependence.

These numerous ships remained in the East until the end of war, except the tug *Gaeta* repatriated in December 1943 and the two subs *Alagi* and *Zoea* who returned to Italy in the fall of 1944.

### 36<sup>th</sup> PERFORMANCE OF MERCANTILE SHIPS.

The situation of the merchant fleet is shown in the following table, where only ships of gross tonnage greater than 500 tons were taken into account, and an attempt was made to establish a reliable medium between the various authorities' calculations, which were not always consistent:

Ships	T.S.L.		
Consistency at 10-6-940	(a) 786	3,318,129	
Buildings during the War	(b) <u>47</u>	<u>265,366</u>	
Total service vessels	(c) 833	3,583,495	
Ships lost before 8 - Sept - 1943	(d) <u>555</u>	<u>2,454,232</u>	
consistency: 8 - Sept - 1943 (c-d)	(e) 278	1,129,263	
Ships lost after 8 - Sept - 1943	(f) <u>226</u>	<u>907,052</u>	
Consistency at the end of the war (e - f)	52	222,211	

As you can see, Italy lost during the Second World War about the fifteen-sixteenth of its merchant navy.

To properly interpret these figures, it should be kept in mind that ships that were lost before 8 September 1943 included those that were in enemy or neutral ports, or in navigation, on the date of 10 June 1940, without being able to return home. A share of the latter, who managed to reach friendly or neutral ports, and those who were already there, could resume the sea and serve by reaching Japanese and occupied France. Those who were in enemy ports were captured and used by the Allies, suffering losses on ocean routes under other flags; the surviving ships were partially restored at the end of war (1).

In any case 212 ships - because many were— for a tonnage of 1,166,637 at seas or out of national ports on our entry into the war and were included in the loses (letter *d* of the yable), because throughout the duration of the hostilities are not available for traffic in the Mediterranean.

It also warns the reader that support our war effort in the Mediterranean took part about 180 ships for 577,734 t.s.l. under the German flag (of which 104 were sunk for 339,100 tons) and 126 ships we captured (for the great part French, Yugoslav and Greek) for 428,925 t.s.l. (of which an inaccurate number is sunk due to lack of documentation).

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(1) There were returned between 1946 and 1949 25 ships for 174,546 t.s.l. and the United States delivered to us 15 "Liberty" (replacing our ships) for 106,319 t.s.l. in total, the Merchant Navy had a contribution of 40 ships for 280,865 t.s.l.

Naturally, after September 8, those, among these ship, who remained in service after the losses suffered were given back by the Allies and returned to their flags of origin.

At the armistice, a part of the existing 278 merchant ships were inefficient for reported damage and part remained in the ports occupied by the Germans in Italy.

In Free Italy there was little more than 60 efficient ships for about 200,000 t.s.l. They were made available to the Allies on the basis of the Cunningham - de Courten Agreement, which, as has been seen, stated that it is "understood" to employ the Italian merchant navy in the same conditions as the merchant ships of the Allied Nations." And, as foreseen by the Agreement, they were placed in the United States merchant navy *pool* and passed under the control of the Mediterranean Shipping Board.

Ships below 500 t.s.l. were used by the Allies and us, in agreement with them, for coastal traffic and to meet the needs of the troops operating on the Italian front, which were not easily satisfied either by the ordinary highways or by the railroads, and by national needs.

Our merchant ships have contributed to the high traffic, which is about 250 of the 1525 convoys mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The contribution made by the Italian merchant navy to the allied cause, acting under the direct dependence of the Ministry of Naval Military in the 20 months of co-belligerency, has been recognized several times by senior allied authorities, and can be summarized by recalling the praise given by the Commander in the Navy of the Mediterranean, Adm. John Cunningham, on the occasion of the meeting held on May 30, 1945 with the intervention of the Italian Armaments Representation: "The tasks entrusted to the merchant navy were fully and effectively fulfilled."

### 37<sup>th</sup> THE MARITIME AVIATION.

Maritime aviation, which was only used by Naval Military Authorities, was - as is known - exclusively equipped with reconnaissance seaplanes.

All seaplanes, who at the proclamation of the armistice managed to reach a base under the control of the Allied or the legitimate Italian government, were organized in a "Flying Boat Regimental groupings"



that, for contingent reasons, was temporarily passed to the total dependency of the Ministry of Aeronautics. The largest number of seaplanes was concentrated in Taranto, while some operated from Brindisi and Cagliari.

The Group's activities started immediately alongside the Allied Aviation and were mainly directed to rescue missions at sea, anti-submarine ship escorts, search and hunting for submarines, mine search. The seaplanes carried out special missions, also flying over enemy territory for transport and retrieval of people and for detecting movements of enemy troops.

In addition to this activity, seaplanes units have performed a great number of flights to cooperate in the anti-aircraft practice exercises of naval units and allied and national batteries.

Given the wear and tear of the material and the difficulty of maintaining it in efficiency due to the scarcity of the pieces of respect and the need to carry out repairs, so that it was not possible to have on average more than 25 to 30 efficient aircraft every month, Activity was sustained at the price of great abnegation and significant sacrifices and risks, especially during missions on territories occupied by the enemy.

It can be summarized in the following figures, which do not include the flights carried out for the above mentioned anti-aircraft training (for which there is no reliable data), being limited to those in close connection with the war operations:

Purposes	Missions
Anti-submarine escort	378
Search and hunt for submarines	392
Search for mine	16
Special Missions	98
Searching and rescue of shipwrecks	<u>330</u>
Total	1214

For 4333 hours of Flight

### 38<sup>th</sup> ACTIVITIES IN THE NAVAL BASES.

It was for cooperation with the Allies, under a threefold aspect: defensive, logistical and technical.

It began at Taranto the evening of September 9, when the convoy was transported as the first contingent of the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army: the Airborne Division. As the operations progressed, they expanded to Brindisi, Bari, Naples, Civitavecchia, Ancona, Livorno and all other small ports - as they were liberated - south of the Gothic line.

Of the two main military bases - Taranto and Naples - the one that could best contribute to the allied war effort was Taranto, which for the vastness of the harbor area, for the presence of a large arsenal and Franco Tosi shipyard, for the size of the defenses offered the greatest logistic possibilities - techniques and best security conditions. Taranto then added that the fact that in October 1943 there were fortunate settlements, the Ministry of the Navy settled there.

It should also be noted that only in Puglia the command authority, with relative responsibility to the Allied armed forces, remained from the first day in Italian hands, being that region (except for the province of Foggia, which was liberated after three weeks from the date of the armistice) the only immediately considered territory of jurisdiction of the Italian Government. In other maritime locations, the Navy competed with its men and its means to restore their efficiency by the Allies for their needs, as long as you provided them only as the Allies handed them over to the Italian Administration.

Lastly, it should be remembered that the Apulian ports had been spared by the bombings of the Royal Air Force, which had targeted its raids, especially the ships in them, and only limited damage had brought back the settlements and military facilities. So the troops of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army, landing at Taranto, had efficiently found the Navy's defensive, logistical and technical organization; This was not the case in Naples when the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army came in from Salerno after 23 days of fighting: therefore, if Naples, after sanctioning the most serious devastation, could have performed the main base function of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army since the beginning of October 1943 onwards, Taranto became also the center of the great part of the military and merchant navy operating in the Mediterranean.

Maritime traffic, coupled with the landing of troops and materials, prompted the rapid upgrading and increase of all services to adapt them to needs far beyond those of the previous war effort, which had been of a different nature. And in fact, up

to the fall of Tunisia, Naples had operated as the main port of supply for troops operating in North Africa and then for those in the islands, while Brindisi and Bari were the end of the traffic with Albania and with Greece; from Taranto had rarely departed from convoy shipping. Now, however, it was necessary to adapt the base of Taranto, which had a modest merchant port, to the need for inflow and removal of men and materials of an operating Army, and to use the devastated great merchant port of Naples for similar purposes.

If in Naples the great initial job was to restore a minimum of efficiency to the massive pre-existing port facilities, Taranto had to: increase mooring berths for unloaded steamers, adapting for the purpose also stretches of docks normally used for other purposes (Precisely many services of the Navy), without however affecting too much on the reachability of these purposes that continued to exist; Speeding up the pilotage service, hire new units and train new staff; intensify anti-submarine vigilance and minesweeping in coastal waters; To form military port companies for various technical services, among which the traffic with the land of the great vessels carrying troops and materials that could not moor at the quays, permanently occupied in turn by those loaded with only materials (1); To form naval and army militant companies, which reached a total average force of the order of 4,000 men (2); To mobilize - so to speak - all the hulls (tugboats, motor-sailing, speedboats, motorboats, boats, barges, canteen, pontoon boats, tankers for water and oil refueling etc.) which the Navy still had after the losses of a long period of war operations; Give in to the Allies properties of every type - barracks, hospitals, office premises, housing, warehouses, as well as all civilian buildings required by the Maritime Military Command on behalf of the Allies.

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(1) To give an idea of the efficiency achieved in this kind of traffic, we will remember that on some occasions they managed to land in Taranto in just over 24 hours a whole Division and embark another, to which the incoming one was giving the exchange..

(2) Excluding the personnel provided by the Army, that of the Navy destined for port operations in Taranto, Bari, Brindisi, Naples, Cagliari and other minor ports, rose to 4,511 men in mid-August 1944.

These assignments and requisitions (all concentrated in the new part of Taranto at the east of the swinging canal) created the problem, which was resolved not without overcoming serious difficulties, to maintain the naval base efficiently, giving - with folds, adaptations and compulsory co-habitation - the possibility of civilian personnel and military living, who for work reasons could not be displaced elsewhere.

Taranto was made available to the Allies in rounded figures:

- Private Apartments and Civil Warehouses: 1800;
- Garages and private workshops: 30;
- Agricultural farms (Farms): 30;
- Buildings in the province: 190;
- Schools and barracks in the city (1): all;
- Schools and Barracks in the province: many;
- Navy warehouses: two thirds;
- Hospitals: half;
- Hotels and restaurants: all except two.

The only barracks left at our disposal was that of the C.R.E.M. (Today C.E.M.M.). With the flow of scattered personnel coming from all over and the one landed by the battleships left with small crews in Maltà and the Amari Lakes, it was briefly insufficient to meet the needs: therefore, it had to provide for provisions, berths and attendances in various locations on the outskirts of Taranto and even further.

If, furthermore, it is thought that forty days after the armistice the Apulian aqueduct was interrupted (following three imposing destructions by the Germans in the area close to its origins) and that the Taranto Military Command was to contribute to the repair Technicians and workers to reinforce those of the Company operating and to regulate the distribution of reserve water contained in the special tankers, taking into account the increased needs for the presence of allied troops; Which was immediately decided on the circulation of the Am-lire\* and the resumption of banking activity, except for government approval; Which - as mentioned in paragraph 26a- - the direction of rail traffic and the control of post-telegraphic communications were also set for about two months (until mid-November) under the jurisdiction

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(1) The Schools could be reopened in makeshift locations at the end of December 1943.

\* Wartime currency

of Military Maritime Commands; That the burden of supplies for civilian populations fell on the Navy who remained with fewer trucks after the appropriated actions of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, and that, to increase the food resources of the population, the Naval Military Command of Taranto managed to organize fishing with 24 trawlers, to the persistent demand from the Allies who had the requisitioned them; that the responsibility of public order and public health (like in Taranto, when the danger of a black outbreak manifested itself) was attributed to the Naval Authorities; that ultimately for any military and civil issue concerning the locations of naval bases and their allied authorities approaching the national seas, it is possible to get a concept of the enormous amount of work provided - especially in Puglia and Taranto in particular - by the Navy to the Allies and for the beginning of the moral and material reconstruction of the country.

With regard to the contribution made by the Navy in the sector, so to say industrial, it was of great importance, especially in Taranto, for the mentioned presence of the arsenal and an important yard, the only remaining practically intact throughout the Mediterranean.

In the arsenal - with the assistance of the other Navy's workshops and private establishments guarded by the Navy - 1846 ships were repaired from 8 September 1943 to 31 July 1945, of which 621 of the Allied Warships, 1022 merchant and ancillary, 203 Italian merchant ships (between big and small) and some hundreds of national warships.

Jobs were executed at peak times for each repaired ship. Widespread acknowledgments given by the British Authorities to our technicians and the workers for the outstanding amount of work delivered and for the proven professional expertise.

We should mention one of the most significant awards made in writing in August 1944 by Adm. Morgan (F.O.L.I.) to the Minister de Courten:

"To give an example of the efficiency of the Taranto arsenal I would like to mention the case of the monitor *Abercrombie* (1). In early July, the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean ordered repairs to this ship with absolute precedence over any other requirement, so that it would be ready for a

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(1) The *Abercrombie* had great devastation in the hull for an underwater explosion.

important mission. The ship was unloaded on July 11; a visit was carried out to determine the damage, was fixed on August 20 as the end date of the work. All experts had agreed that time, set in 40 days, was very tight and that it would have been in any arsenal of the world with daytime and nighttime continuous work. The officers and workers of the Taranto arsenal have managed to reduce this time by 25 percent, completing the work in thirty days. The ship left the basin on August 10 and departed from Taranto on 14 August. In addition, the chief of staff of the naval engineers of the Chief of Staff of the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean communicated to me, not only did he seem almost a miracle to prepare the ship in such a short time, but also that the perfection of the joints, welding and repair was undoubtedly up to the best results available in any British or American yard. I would like to cordially thank all those who have contributed to this magnificent effort to fulfill the order and wish of my Commander in Chief”.

All ship repairs were carried out using almost exclusively the materials needed by Marina's stocks, which turned out to be very large, especially in the metal sector. Other materials and furnishings of all kinds were provided to the Allied Navy for their daily needs.

To allow the smooth running of all the activities mentioned, the defensive accommodations continued to remain in full war position, strengthened for the anti-aircraft part (batteries, artificial fogging, aerial sighting networks) with share of weapons and means brought by the Allies, the insertion of these means into our organization required remarkable adaptations in systems and methods to harmonize them with those in use with the Allies.

In the field of anti-aircraft defense, the most important contribution was given by the Italian Navy in Puglia for the protection of three airports.

The American Air Force had used the Oria Fields (near Manduria), San Pancrazio (between Manduria and Lecce) and Galatina (near Lecce) as its first airfields; Bases, to which he added others in the province of Foggia.

The anti-aircraft defense of the first three fields was entrusted to the Maritime Military Command of Taranto. This meant that three units of sailors, armed in a total of 40 37 mm anti-aircraft guns, had to be divided between the three fields, providing their huts

and putting weapons on the perimeter of the fields.

Another contribution given by Taranto by the Maritime Military Command for General Security was the destruction of 80 unexploded British bombs, traced at various points in the city and its immediate vicinity: a group of bomb disposal engineers was hired with the help of a British expert made expressly on site.

Brindisi, with the arrival of the Head of State and of the Head of Government with a number of Ministers, took on a major role in the post-armistical affairs, especially as regards the reorganization of the Armed Forces and the State Administration: It remained so important until the transfer of the Government to Salerno, which took place in early February 1944. The above-mentioned reorganization provided effective support, providing local and personnel, the Commander in Chief of the Ionian and Lower Adriatic and the two Maritime Military Commands of Taranto and of Brindisi. Brindisi was also home to Supermarina until its abolition (October 4, 1943), when its functions were devolved to the Maristat Operations Office, which in the same month of October moved to Taranto together with the Ministry of the Navy.

In the base of Brindisi, the Allies set up a Naval Resident (with similar functions but with more extensive powers than those of the N.O.I.C.) and an office called the Extended Defense Office (XDO) was established within the Italian Navy, governed by a Naval Lieutenant, dependent on the local anti-sub Subgroup, who had - as before the armistice - the task of anti-sub fighting and the organization of related means. The X.D.O. corresponded with Naval Resident and was responsible for the use of the means available to him, from the Maritime Military Command.

The creation of this office was recognized as necessary for the importance taken by Brindisi as the main operating base of the Lower Adriatic, from which it radiated and flowed all the navy on the move to maintain the connection with the opposite Adriatic coast, having various purposes between which prevailed on the recovery of staff from Balkans and the relative special missions.

On the X.D.O. they depended:

- the net obstruction at the entrance of the inner harbor;
- the temporary surveillance and that of the external port or approaches, entrusted to the Vas;

- search and discovery by an English radar;
- Continuous surveillance of the docks and shores of the external harbor;
- surveillance of the internal harbor;
- traffic surveillance;
- communications with the ships at sea.

The mixed workshop (with departments of naval engineers and naval weapons) of Brindisi lent its work to the maintenance of the efficiency of allied and national means in the Brindisi sector,

In Naples, the situation was - as mentioned - much more complex than in Taranto, as far as the efficiency of the services was concerned - given the serious destruction caused by armistice after the bombing and after the armistice of retreating Germans - But much easier for relations with the Allies and for the resumption of the activity of co-belligerency, since Taranto has become a force for things that can be called the temporary "capital of the Navy", the headquarters of the Ministry and all Naval Commands and Inspectorates examined.

The Chief Command of the Department of Naples resumed on October 4, 1943, following an agenda of the Adm. Casardi on October 3, in which it was established which and as many offices of the Command in Chief and of the Commanders were reconstituted. On 24 October, the Navy Command Naples was established, which was entrusted to contrammiraglio [Rear Adm.] Giovanni Galati.

The first occupation of the Command in Chief was to reconstruct the situation concerning personnel and administration as well as events from 11 September to 1 October 1943, a period of lacking effective command authority following the events that occurred between the forced abandonment of the normal headquarters of the Command in Chief and the entry into Naples of American troops.

In order to increase the efficiency of the collaboration with the Allies on October 29, 1943, on directives issued by the Ministry, Adm. Casardi wrote to F.O.W.I.T. a letter stating the organization of the entities and services he employed and made proposals to perfect the organization on the basis of the following aims to be pursued:

- assistance to military and merchant ships in Italy participating in the war effort;
- gradual reactivation of industrial plants;
- reorganization, under the control of the Navy, of the Campania war industries;



- Collaboration in the recovery and restoration of ships sunk in waters of jurisdiction;
- reactivating a number of anti-aircraft batteries, to add to the 6 remaining effective at 18 after the sabotage made by the Germans;
- supply the work for any Allied Forces needs and for the needs of the national war industry wherever it is required.

To allow this program, Admiral Casardi suggested that:

- It was given the freedom of movement and action to circulate in the Navy and Harbor facilities and to go to the Navy, Military and Civilian Staff appointed by the Command in Chief;
- the availability of premises, which are recognized as necessary for all activities to be provided;
- Ensuring the availability of the Navy's materials and means of transport, exempting them from allied requisitions and limitations of employment and traffic;
- the availability of Navy's credit to local banks, which had been blocked by the US authorities, was solicited.

Eight anti-aircraft batteries were efficiently recruited, with the help of Italian personnel who also provided the battery commanders and pieces of weaponry while Americans provided the necessary food and vehicles.

In mid-October at the request of the Allies, 2000 men were sent to Naples by the M.M. Command of Taranto to strengthen the anti-aircraft defense.

For the rest, the business grew steadily as the consistency and the organic efficiency of the various agencies increased.

Imposing was the work of clearing the port of Naples from the many wrecks and the restoration of port facilities: Americans assisted with a unit of specialists equipped with great technical means. It could not have been entirely accomplished that in the end of the war, but after a few weeks the port of Naples was in a position to accommodate the intense supply traffic of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army

### 39<sup>th</sup> THE "SAN MARCO" REGIMENT.

Some availability of personnel, which occurred for various reasons after the armistice, allowed the Navy to also participate in operations on the land front of the Italian Corps of Liberation (C.I.L.), reconstructing the "San Marco" regiment whose glorious traditions dates back to 1917-18 When it was created to fight on the Lower Piave for the defense of Venice.

The regiment - under the command of cap. vasc. [Captain] Augusto Tesi - was initially constituted with one and then on two battalions ("Bafile" and "Grado"), a regimental command company and a mortar company and subjected to intense training, similar to that of the assault, in the localities of Erchie And Alezio (in the province of Lecce), by the MM Command of Taranto, in the winter of 1943 - 44. Commander Tesi was replaced on February 22, 1945 by cap. vasc. [Captain] Adriano Foscari,

Sent into the line in early April 1944 in the Cassino area under the direct dependence of an Allied Command, it fought for fifty days in that tormented and cruel frontal sector by tying its name to hill 508, to Monte Cicurro, to Valvori, to hill 907, to Mulino del Vado, to hill 954 along the rugged valley of the Rapido.

Liberated Cassino on May 18, 1944 (or unfortunately, in other words, its ruins), the regiment was immediately sent to Abruzzo to reinforce the recently established "Nembo" Division. It first contributed to the liberation of Chieti and then - always under the offices of C.I.L. - overwhelmingly or in tactical cooperation with allied units, German resistance, participated in advancing along the Adriatic side, contributing to the liberation of Santa Maria Nuova, Iesi, Belvedere, Ostra Vetere, Corinaldo, Ca' Bernardi, Cagli, Acqualagna, Urbino. There were another two months of combat and marches, alternating with each other, almost without stop.

Retreated from the front at the end of summer 1944, reorganized and replenished by actual figures, enhanced by a new battalion ("Caorle"), in the winter of 1945, reached its new combat post on the front of Romagna in the Combat Group "Folgore" (1).

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(1) In January 1945, the bulk of the "San Marco" had been concentrated in the Marche; its last contingent of 244 men reached it on Feb. 8, after being transported from Taranto and landed at Ortona on 6 February by the DD. *Grecale* from Ortona, via land; the contingent joined the main body that was about 100 km northwest.

It thus deserved and was pleased to contribute to the collapse of the German front of northern Italy, including - among other things - the conquest of the famous Tassignano bastion, one of the rugged and equipped with the fortified enemy line, rising like a wall 300 meters high, with steep walls and difficult to cross.

The regiment, which from an initial force of 1100 men (when on a single battalion) came to the consensus of 3400 men, paid its blood tax on the cause of freedom with the loss of 479 valiant men (21% of its average strength).

Here is a summary of the history of the regiment's activity.

From April 9, 1944 to May 19, 1944:

Strength: one battalion ("Bafile") and a machine gun company. Dependency: from the English XIX Corps and then on the New Zealand Divisions Group (Gen. Freyberg).

Operating area: Tirrenica in the area of Venafrò.

Actions taken: participation in the liberation of Cassino (May 18, 1944).

From 2 June 1944 to June 14, 1944:

Strength: one Battalion ("Bafile"), a machine gun company and a cannon company.

Dependency: On the "Nembo" Division. Operating area: Adriatic in Abruzzo.

Actions taken: participation in the liberation of Chieti (June 9, 1944).

From August 15, 1944 to September 1944:

Strength: Two Battalions ("Bafile" & "Grado") and cannons, machine guns and mortars.

Dependency: on the "Nembo" Division (the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army).

Operating area: Adriatic to the north of Macerata.

Actions: Santa Maria Nuova, Lesi, Belvedere, Ostra Vetere, Corinaldo, Ca' Bernardi, Cagli, Acqualagna, Urbino (1).

From March 3, 1945 to April 17, 1945:

Strength: Three battalions ("Badile", "Grado", "Caorle"), companies and services

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(1) Two major episodes occurred during this operating cycle: the action of the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Anselmo Marchi, commander of the Arditi company of the "Grado" battalion, who noted the presence of a fire center that had a major disruption to the action in the area of Belvedere Ostrense

Dependency: on the "Folgore" Division. (8<sup>th</sup> Army of the United Kingdom).

Operating area: Adriatic to the north of the previous one.

Actions taken: Monte Castello, Pieve di Sant'Andrea, Monte del Re, Mount Bello, Monte Catone, Dozza (1).

On April 25, 1945, the regiment moved to reorganize at Celle (Faenza), where it was on May 8 at the end of hostilities in Europe and was then sent to garrison South Tyrol with the task of tracking the remains of Germanic troops who had disappeared without delivering their arms.

A special unit of the "San Marco" regiment, marked with the inscription N.P. (Swimmers - Parachutists), which was also reconstructed in Taranto, operated from June 144 until the end of the conflict with so much capacity and value that the Allies wanted some fifty men. They would be aggregated to a special training indicated with the word "O.S.S." at the command of American Naval Lieutenant Kelly.

The N.P. unit was composed of "sapper" specialists in sabotage actions and surprise, generally carried out from landing points behind the enemy lines: it had already shown itself well in North Africa.

The actions of the N.P. unit were more than 50, made with the assistance of MTB and of Mas destined to transport the N.P. Operators to the points of landing

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on July 21, 1944, he attacked it on his own initiative and destroyed it; Continuing the reconnaissance of the area, eliminated another fire center capturing prisoners, until he became a target of enemy fire falling on the field. It was decorated by the M.O. [Gold Medal for valor] in memory.

Occupying on August 4, 1944 Ostra Vetere, the "San Marco", deployed to the north of this town, commencing the advance on Corinaldo. After three days of fierce fighting Corinaldo on August 10 was occupied. During a desperate battle of Corinaldo, Lieutenant Casati (of the Army, in service to the Navy) had fallen heroically at the head of a platoon he had voluntarily taken over the command.

(1) It was during this period that the episode of a 7-person patrol of the "Caorle", commanded by Chief 3<sup>rd</sup> Class [Chief Petty Officer] Alberto Pisani, surrounded by prevailing enemy forces and with all its members more or less seriously wounded, succeeded To go back to their own lines in the heroic behavior of the patrol leader, who though the wounded remained in defense of the withdraw of his men by succeeding in his intent and then returning even though he was twice wounded.

At first it was landing and retrieving observers, sabotaging, connecting and supplies to groups of patriots: always on the edge of enemy lines on open and well guarded beaches, reaching the landing points with MTBs. or with Mas and landing with boats or rubber rafts.

Subsequently, with the progress of the winter of 1944-45 and with the gradual shifting of the forehead to the north, the N.P. unit could change the type of activity a little and intensify it.

The landings were no longer carried out on an open coast, but in the wetlands of Comacchio and the Po delta, after short sailing from nearby locations, often carried out by fishing boats that were easy to maneuver and more suitable than the MTBs to get into the area of low water. The missions aimed to land informants with radio transmitters in the enemy's rear to get information on the situation of the enemy troops, to get in touch with the formation of the patriots, to provide their equipment and armament. Sometimes they aimed to open passages for upcoming advances, freeing the ground from mined fields to a very short distance from enemy positions.

Very often the brave N.P. participated in surprise attacks performed by patriots.

The heroism of the N.P. unit, the momentum and the spirit of self-denial and initiative of its members, had its final prize when on 30 April 1945 it first landed in Venice.

From April 20, it alone and together with allied troops led the extreme right wing of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army - whose deployment occupied the most advanced position on the sea side - a series of heinous actions, involving numerous prisoners and capturing various war material, so as to facilitate the Allied march towards the queen of the Adriatic,

On May 15 the N.P. unit returned to the exclusive dependence of the Italian Navy, having ceased the need for direct collaboration with the Allied forces, for which it had taken orders for a number of operations for about a year.

#### 40<sup>th</sup> RELATIONS WITH THE ALLIED COMMANDS.

At the conclusion of this re-enactment of the co-belligerence activity it is necessary to make a nod of the way as the consensus between our Commands and those allied was established.

From an initial mistrust - quite plausible, and greater by both English and American - the Allies gradually passed to a satisfactory trust and understanding, sometimes with real friendly camaraderie. Naturally, the various attitudes were influenced by the temperament of those who imitated the authority of the command in the various places, on one side and on the other.

However, according to the higher directives issued by the United Nations Governments, the Anglo - American Authorities interfered with the activities of Italy in general, and the Navy in particular, with an intensity that if it had been less, it would certainly have produced much better fruits.

In September 1944, the President of the Council Honorable Ivanoe Bonomi (succeeded by Marshal Badoglio in June), in anticipation of a revision of the armistice conditions by the United Nations, had asked all ministers to report on allied interference in the operation of their respective ministries, or subordinate bodies, accompanied by proposals to be presented to the Allies in order to obtain a lightening of the armistice controls, whose consequences on the functioning of our State Administration had itself sometimes been detrimental to the good performance of civil and military management of public affairs.

From the report presented by the Minister de Courten, we note the main interferences of the Allies in the organization and activity of the Navy.

*a) Port activity.*

The port of Naples and other ports returned to the management of the Italian authorities continued to be under strict Allied occupation.

As far as port work is concerned, the Allied Authorities followed their own criteria (sometimes different from place to place) and did not want to recognize our port workers organizations nor the legislation in force on port work.

*b) Use of merchant navy.*

All the merchant navy was used by the Allies; For the expected transport of the Italian population's supplies we had been left with a completely insufficient share (without taking into account

of what was said in this regard in the Cunningham - de Courten Agreement, paragraph 28) represented only 15,000 tons of motor sailboats, and the use of this modest share was also constantly controlled by the Allies.

*c) Recovery of sunken ships.*

Recovery work at national ports was heavily hampered. In ports, declared "operational" by the Allies, recovery was their responsibility. Demolitions of recovered hulls were also carried out in these ports, without taking any account of the interests of the Italian State (vessels under requisition or charter, insured ships, etc.)

The Allies sometimes intervened to have wrecks found in waters which they themselves declared our competence.

*d) Workshops and materials.*

The Allied Authorities had taken control of the Taranto arsenal, on which the Captain Superintendent exercised full interference (paragraph 26). The workers had been employed for two-thirds to the work on allied ships and for a third to those on Italian ships. It was the result that often, due to lack of workforce, the latter could not be timely or satisfyingly repaired.

All our warehouses also exercised strict control, including on the use of materials.

Finally, the control extended to all the national industries working for the Navy, so that in practice it was very difficult to have an honest and free of the national market.

*e) Living.*

The Allied Authorities exercised a prior check and sometimes following the assignments they had made to the Navy.

If preventive control was in the full right of those who provided the food we were short, the following was not justified: intact, determined the number of people to be fed and the withdrawals consequently no further control should have been carried out by the Allies, leaving the Navy authorities to administer the food taken in connection with the needs of our services,

*f) Personnel.*

There were continuous interferences in the use of staff and transfers. Often, the Allies gave assignments without passing through the Navy Authorities.

*g) Military Justice.*

In this field, meddling (rather than interference) was manifested with more serious consequences, hampering the free conduct of the military magistrate.

The Allied Authorities generally refused to hand over to the Navy persons interned in concentration camps for questioning and referral in court because they were guilty of serious military offenses.

Sometimes they were arrested at their Naval Military Arbitration for facts already under investigation by the Maritime Military Authorities, and for which they had already recognized that there was no reason to proceed.

Finally, the Allies would have made substantive changes to our military war criminal code, with a reduction in punishment for some offenses and aggravated by others, or the denial of the benefits granted by the Military Courts to those who, according to our laws, had right.

*h) Operating field.*

Allied interference in this field was very extensive, which - if in some respects apparently logical - for others it was not right to be, either because it gave the impression of a peculiar mistrust or because it hindered the normal running of the activity war,

All radio communications were controlled; and so did allied censorship throughout the correspondence of Navy personnel, although it had already been censored by the Italian military authorities.

Ship crews who were in allied bases outside of our territory were, as a rule, excluded from the regular free exit; The Navy authorities could not contact for informational purposes directly with Italian personnel abroad or in the territory occupied by the Germans.

In the areas liberated in the immediate behind the front, the Navy could never immediately send its representatives to pick up staff and recover resources and materials; The Allied Authorities



were systematically opposed and granted permissions, after official request, with very late and very few elements.

Following the reporting of these problems concerning the Navy, which were added to those occurring in the various branches of the State Administration, Mr. Bonomi took action on February 24, 1945 on the announcement by Mr. Mac Millan, president of the Allied Controls Commission of for Italy, of measures in favor of our country, in order to ease the burden of controls.

He stated that "these measures are intended to be a further step towards the desired aim of the normalization of the international situation in Italy by both parties," gradually replacing the control of "an increasingly friendly and confident collaboration".

The new measures, which were given greater autonomy to the Italian Government in foreign, commercial and financial policy, included, among other things, the abolition of the political section of the allied Commission and of the allied military organs in the territory returned from 1 March the Italian Administration and, from April 1<sup>st</sup>, the same abolition for the regional offices of Sicily, Sardinia, Lazio, Umbria and southern Italy.

In contrast, it should be recalled that during the long armed period Italy received from the United Nations a continuous inflow of supplies and provisions, which the Navy also benefited, especially by supplying food, clothing or fuel without which - moreover - the activity of co-belligerence on the sea could not have been carried out.

#### 41<sup>st</sup> ORGANS OF CONNECTION.

To ensure the adherence of our activity to the warfare needs of the Allies, it was necessary to establish permanent liaison organs.

On November 10, 1943, the Allied Control Commission was set up in Italy, which was repeatedly cited, presided over by Gen. Wilson was replaced in November 1944 by Mr MacMillan; But it had deliberative and non-linking functions.

Thus, in January 1944, the Navy established the Italian Naval Mission to the Commander in Chief of the Allied Naval Forces of the Mediterranean, placing it at the head - with the prior permission of F.O.L.I. - cap. vasc. [Captain] Ernesto Giuriati who already served as a liaison officer (paragraph 2). He was also the representative of the Navy in the Italian military mission at the Allied Command, presided over by Gen. Castellano and having his headquarters in Algiers (Captain Giuriati was replaced in November 1944 by Captain Ferrante Capponi).

When in July 1944 the Commander in Chief's Allied Headquarters moved to Caserta, the Castellano Mission followed him, and in Algeria it was deemed necessary to set up a "liaison office of the Italian Navy in North Africa" dealing with F.O.W.M. (Flag Officer Western, Mediterranean) problems caused by the presence and transit of Italian military and merchant vessels in the western Mediterranean.

In September 1944, finally, he felt the need to establish another Naval Connection Office in Gibraltar with F.O.G.M.A. (Flag Officer Gibraltar and Mediterranean Approaches). A superior officer was appointed, detached from the Naval Commissar Office in Madrid, which, in addition to dealing with maritime affairs, also dealt with the repatriation of military personnel from Spain, who faced internally.

For this assignment the cap. freg. rich. [Commander (ret.)] Edgardo Storich, formerly a vice-consul in Palma de Mallorca, which he held until January 1945 had been issued to the ships that had taken refuge in the Balearic Islands.

#### 42<sup>nd</sup> FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MILITARY AND MERCANTILE NAVY TO THE COMMON WAR EFFORT TO THE ALLIES.

On October 27, 1944, Minister de Courten, following a determination by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the study of economic and financial problems to be considered during post-war negotiations with Allies, ordered the formation of a commission chaired by an admiral with the task to calculate the value of the contribution given by the Navy (military and merchant) for the liberation war.

The Commission - under the abbreviated name "Marieco" - worked for more than three years, carried out thorough investigations and became - as a main source - monthly reports that each Authority

had sent to the Ministry about the performance of each type made to the Allies. All these performances had to be credited to Italy in account of war repairs.

Bearing in mind that the whole Navy organization had been put into action for the achievement of victory, with all ships the means and services, Marieco turned its attention, according to the directives received, to the following topics:

- the activities of Navy ships;
- the work of arsenals and workshops;
- the activity of units framed in the land forces;
- the activity of the merchant fleet;
- the work of elements framed in port organizations;
- the work of prisoners of war of the Navy, co-workers after 1 September, 1943;
- the burden of the deaths of war survivors during the war for liberation.

The last *figure of 1947 in millions of lire* found in the archives of the Historical Office is contained in the Commission's report of 20 May 1947. However, many Commands and Bodies had not yet received their closed accounts at that date, and precisely of 219 Commands and Bodies, Marieco had full data on only 93.

In any case, here is the summary picture of the performance in million lire of 1947 presented on May 20, 1947 by Marieco:

<i>Performance</i>		<i>Received by the Allies</i>	
Ceding of materials and workforce		Materials supplied	5,374
performance	26,437	Currency provided	<u>342</u>
Contribution to military ships	43,364	Total	5,716
Merchant Shipping Contribution	19,756		
War pensions for post-armistice events	<u>475</u>		
Total	90,032		

Total Italian net receivables: 84,316 million.

By transforming this lire figure of 1947 into the lire of 1960, readers - accustomed to valuing things in current currency - have the immediate feeling of the performance made, it is obtained:

Millions of lire 1960 173,000 (coeff. 2,053)

Since the services lasted until 1948 and the reports of some agencies found there was an increase in the order of magnitude of 10% compared to the figures of May 20, 1947, it is roughly possible to calculate the financial equivalent of Navy benefits for the Allies.

To this figure is added the estimate of the damage caused by the destruction caused by the anti-Nazi fight, which Marieco evaluated as follows (definitive figures, since in May 1947 the war had ceased for two years):

Damage to works, plants, materials	221,209
Damage to military ships	174,957
Damage to merchant ships	<u>62,111</u>
Total	458,277

Equal to 940,048 million lire in 1960.

Damage to works, installations and materials was considered eligible for repairs when:

- they were derived from German attack or coercion;
- they were derived from military operations of the Allied or Italian co-belligerent forces;
- they were derived from demolitions, destructions and assaults carried out in connection with military operations.

Ultimately, the amount accrued to Italy for repairs, for the services of the Navy, was of the order of magnitude of 1150 million lire present, bearing in mind that the item "war pensions" was in May 1947 still incomplete because the investigations on the dead and the crippled were not completed and data on the work done by the cooperating prisoners were missing.

## CHAPTER VII

### SPECIAL MISSIONS

#### 43<sup>rd</sup> PURPOSES OF SPECIAL MISSIONS AND MODES OF EXECUTION.

Special missions can group, according to purpose, into the following categories:

- a) landing and retrieval of informants and saboteurs on the coasts controlled by the enemy;
- b) landing of materials for patriots;
- c) retrieval of soldiers in the Balkans;
- d) hydrographic surveys of beach stretches on enemy controlled coasts, in preparation for Anglo - American landings and liaison missions and patrol support during the operations;
- e) support for the operations of the Italian navy assault vessels in cooperation with the Allied Marine Corps.

The missions began at the end of September 1943, following the Courten - Cunningham agreement of September 23, *and they represented the first concrete form of co-belligerence*. Each mission normally included allied personnel, alongside the commander of the ships employed, as well as between men designed to act in a variety of ways, according to the purpose to be achieved.

*a) Disembarkation and recovery of informants and saboteurs (mostly N.P.[Nationalist partisans]).*

This kind of missions have taken part in MTB, Mas and later also submarines.

MTB and Mas were used in the following ways ..

One or two ships, after embarking on the crew to land and the materials set for the mission, left an advanced base in an hour of the afternoon to reach

the chosen point (Pin - Point in English) for landing in an hour of the night suitable for the operation, taking into account the need to avoid the moonlight; So there were no such operations during the night around the moonlight.

Once off the selected point, the unit started to approach the coast with silent auxiliary motors until they recognized the designated point. Whenever possible, as a result of previous understanding of ground elements (1), the discovery of the landing point was facilitated by the exchange of luminous signals with the shore (light, generally blued lights).

Once reaching the least distance from the ground, so as to make the journey as short as possible to the rope, rowing or electric powered boats were put into the sea: the personnel of the armament and the one destined to disembark the boats headed for the beach.

So the most delicate phase of the operation began. Not so often the flushing of the oars or some unexpected noise drew the attention of the personnel of the enemy coast guard and followed a fire action with light weapons (which rarely joined some artillery pieces) against the boats or the ships waiting to recover them, or against both.

Sometimes the ships encountered similar enemy ships at the port of landing. In the fights that followed the MTB or the Mas had to leave and abandon the enterprise, if it had not yet begun, to avoid the action of generally overwhelming forces, At other times our ships had to abandon men to their fate. landed; more often, though, they could return to the scene and recover the boats with their weapons, performing very daring maneuvers that aroused the admiration of the allied officers present.

It also happened that the fate of men fleeing the boats was shared by the crew of the ships burned or exploded under enemy shooting.

In the areas where enemy surveillance was more active, the sailboats and Mas were escorted by a 'torpedo' of protection against any attacks from the ground.

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(1) Preventive arrangements were established via radio, between the competent Allied Naval Command (ie for the Adriatic, F.O.T.A.L.I.) and the functionaries already in the area.

After a while the pneumatic boats were replaced by the dingy provided by the Allies, much more suited to bringing men and materials dry to the ground.

Given the small autonomy of the small ships to be used, the missions were carried out within a limited range from the starting base (chosen in the most advanced position possible) so that it would run out in less than 24 hours. Sometimes, using special gimmicks, landings have been made to a few hundred miles from the base (such as, for example, in the Venice area, leaving Termoli with about 4500 miles of round trip).

The environmental elements that are not always favorable and some sudden disadvantage to the material have caused the expertise, cold bloodiness, and personality abnegation (of course very high) to have been hard-pressed. Any hesitation, distraction, or error could compromise the outcome of a mission with serious consequences, not only for it, but for all its successors as well.

Submarine missions lasted longer (up to a week) and generally involved more than one landing operation with appointments in various areas of the coast.

The characteristics of the submarines were able to carry a large number of operators to land with their weapons and materials; In addition, the great autonomy of underwater boats allowed to return to a failed landing during the same mission, allowing commanders to fine-tune the execution mode based on the experience.

Since June 1944, as well as the nucleus of operators of our assault organization, have come into action.

These units - transported, landed, and recovered from submarines or MTB - have carried out brilliant actions of destruction of militaristic goals near the Adriatic coast, such as bridges, roads, pilings, railway convoys, etc., by means of explosive or incendiary charges.

The actions were organized by US officers and were sometimes conducted in collaboration with R.A.F. (Royal Air Force), whose units had the task of attacking stationary columns for road breaks, caused by our operators shortly before and made visible by the light emitted by incendiary charges along the roads.

*b) and c) Disembarkation of materials for patriots and retrieval of personnel landed (especially in the Balkans).*

These two types of missions were generally matched, as long as there were military stragglers to be recovered.

In December 1943 an attempt was made to establish with the army officers a military collection center left after the armistice in Balkans: the attempt failed, it did not follow.

However, the Anglo - American information centers were interested in gathering and starting towards some coasts of Italian soldiers; The recuperation was carried out - albeit occasionally - by the torpedoes, landing craft, MTBs and anti-submarine patrol boats, which for special missions approached at noon to the Greek-Albanian coast: the first purpose of these missions was to land the material destined for partisan formations.

At first such operations were carried out by the torpedoes and submarines; subsequently they took part in the landing craft, intended to bring the load, sometimes considerable, directly to the beaches. In this case the TB function was to tow the rafts during the crossing to make it more urgent, to protect it and to direct the operations.

The use of landing craft simplified and shortened landing operations, because while the torpedoes or submarines were forced to stop at a considerable distance from the shore, and the material had to be ferried with boats with great loss of time, with probable partial or total failure of the mission and sometimes with some loss of material, the landing of the landing craft was immediate as soon as they had grounded with the bow on the beach. For the purpose of securing the hook at suitable points, for the absence of rocks and for the appropriate inclination of the bottom, a reconnaissance dingy was sent; who, chose the point, guided the landing craft.

Even for the embarkation of men, the landing craft solved the problem in the least time and with the utmost security, as people who were generally without a maritime experience, otherwise they would have to board and ferry on small boats in full darkness and under sea conditions not always easy,

In total, these missions on the coasts of Balkans were 32 and about 1600 Italian soldiers were recovered.



*d) Hydrographic surveys.*

In January 1944, were assigned to our MTBs of the flotilla to Capri for hydrographic surveys and reconnaissance in the Anzio-Nettuno coastal area as preliminary preparations for the departure of the Anglo-Americans started on January 22, 1944.

Similarly, in the following spring, one of our destroyers carried out a support mission to assault boats, used with mixed Italian crews and allied in relief along the Albanian coast to study the landings being prepared.

In September 1944, a group of MTBs and Mas carried out numerous missions in collaboration with allied ships during the preparatory phase and during the Allies landings in the Aegean and Balkan territories, landings that - starting at the beginning of September 1944 - Led to the progressive evacuation of the Germans from the Balkan countries, an evacuation that ended in late 1944. In an operational cycle of about a month, under conditions that were often difficult for adverse weather or enemy conflict, our ships have tirelessly dedicated themselves brilliantly fulfilling their task.

*e) Support for assault means.*

A destroyer and a MTB were specially equipped for the support operations of the Italian Navy assault vehicles in union with the Allied Navy.

The function of the destroyer and the MTB was that, already widely experienced by us before the armistice, to approach bases and ports to drop underwater operators and wait to recover them.

For operators the risk, after the armistice, was much higher than before. In fact, if they were captured, they would almost certainly have been shot, rather than being considered prisoners of war, as had always been the case in forcing British bases.

All the special operations were given by the Allies as conventional names, according to their habit, such as Puccini, Rossini, Verdi, Glacehouse, Beta, Indipendence, Epigram, Clarissa, Landlord, and so on. Many operations, having in common or their purpose or operating area, had a common denomination with a progressive number: for example, Epigram I, II, III, IV, etc.

#### 44<sup>th</sup> TOTAL ACTIVITY AND ORGANIZATION.

In total, the special missions carried out between September 1943 and the end of the conflict were 335, so distributed:

<i>Type of ships employed</i>	<i>Adriatic side</i>			<i>Tyrrhenian side</i>		
	1943	1944	1945	1943	1944	1945
MTB, Mas, VAS	27	156	23	15	45	1
DD, TB, Corv	1	44	2	-	1	1
Sub	7	12	-	-	-	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>212</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>2</u>
Overall total: 335						

The small insidious units operated in two main theaters: the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic - Ionian, and with particular intensity in the Adriatic, especially during 1944, as appears from the table.

##### *a) Activities in the Tyrrhenian Sea.*

In Tyrrhenian, the *special services fleet*, constituted November 3, 1943, with an order of the F.O.W.I.T. (Flag Officer Western Italy Transport - let's remember). Here's the genesis.

Following the German occupation of Gaeta and Naples shortly after the armistice, the location of the small ships was as follows:

- in Capri: the MTB of the II Mas flotilla under the command of cap. freg. [Commander] Alessandro Michelagnoli; The anti-sub squadron (unit with characteristic A.S.) controlled by the sten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Giuseppe Po;
- in Ischia: the units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> squadron Vas under the command of the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Claudio De Angeli; Motorboats and motor sailboats constituting the 2<sup>nd</sup> anti-sub squadron under the command of ten. vasco c. [Lieutenant] Francesco De Laurentis; The minesweepers of the minesweeper group of Naples.

This situation remained unchanged until the liberation of Naples, and this passed on 1 October under allied control.

In the last days of September, the Allies demanded a Vas, crewed with Italians and Italian flags, to carry out landing operations of commandos and informants on the coasts controlled by the Germans. Vas 222 was granted (belonging to

the 3<sup>rd</sup> squadron) with volunteer crew. Subsequently, the B.S.F. (British Special Force) had requested Vas 211 from Maridipart Naples, and had thus constituted the Vas 211 - Vas 222 section employed for the use by the B.S.F. Soon, however, it was found that the Vas had insufficient speed for purposes and were too loud to perform surprise operations. Thus, at the request of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army, the BSF turned its attention to the MTBs of Capri (there were Ms 24, 52, 72 – see paragraph 27), which formed the first nucleus of the "Special Services Flotilla" that from November 3, located at Ischia at the command of the senior officer of the boats who was Michelagnoli, was composed of Ms 24,52 and 72, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vas squadron (Vas 206, 211, 218, 222, 226 and motorized Sailing boats *Cotugno* and *Cappelletti*), with the efficient motorboats, trawlers and motorized sailing boats necessary for logistical needs.

Ms 24 and 52 and Vas 211 and 222 were "allocated" (ie made available) to B.S.F. while the other ship were operated by F.O.W.I.T. and for it by N.O.I.C. of Ischia in the meantime installed on the island. The Royal Navy pledged to supply everything needed for the special services fleet.

On January 18, 1944, the flotilla command passed to cap. freg. [Commander] Nicola Riccardi, while cap. freg. [Commander] Michelagnoli having been destined for another assignment.

On February 13, 1944, the fleet lost the Vas 206, a fire manifested in navigation in the engine room. Despite the work of the crew, the fire could not be tamed and to the rescue of the Vas, which was off Capri, was an English minesweeper, which was forced to sink the ship with machine guns to avoid an explosion of the petrol tanks, after having taken on board the crew.

On February 16, 1944, Ms 24 moved from Ischia to Bastia and joined the V Mas Flotilla, which had its headquarters in La Maddalena, to operate from this base. She carried out various missions, of which two special landings at two points on the Ligurian coast, and returned to Ischia on May 25, 1944

On March 25, 1944, Ms. 52 also ordered to move to Bastia, near La Maddalena. She had to leave for a breakdown on the invertors and return to Ischia on April 2 in order to replace the device.

Meanwhile, the three MTBs of the flotilla had, in section two, alternated four special missions on the Anzio - Neptune coast to make hydrographic surveys by personal

particularly trained by the British, in view of the allied landing that began on January 22, 1944. MTB were praised for these missions by the Naval Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean.

Vas 211 and 222, assigned to the B.S.F., were used together with Vas 206 for connections between Naples and Ischia and for the transportation of allied officers to the various gulf locations. Subsequently, a Vas was assigned in turn to the port security office in Naples for port security services.

For Vas's logistical needs for local services, the trawler *Edoardo C.* was armed as a support vessel, but - in order to satisfy the more urgently needed - the British authorities obtained from our Navy that the fishing boat was derequisitioned, Requisitioned it for their account and crewed with British staff flying the English flag.

Fusion in a single fleet of disparate ships - such as MTBs, patrol boats, sailboats, speedboats - had been wanted and carried out by British authorities for contingent employment purposes. Of course, there was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vas squadron, which had its installations for staff accommodation and repairs in Ischia.

When MTB were no longer "allocated" to the BSF, as it was no longer planned in the area of activity suitable for flotilla ships and as the trawler *Edoardo C.* passed under the British flag, Maristat on 1 May 1944 disbanded the fleet of special services and automatically with it the II Mas Flotilla, bringing together the Tyrrhenian ships with the V Mas Flotilla, divided into two squadrons: one of Mas in Sardinia and one of the MTB for special services in Ischia. The V flotilla, in its new constitution, had as commander cap. freg. [Commander] Giuseppe Roselli Lorenzini,

During the period of its existence - from November 1943 to April 1944 - the squadron of the special services fleet carried out 14 missions on the coast occupied by the enemy, including 3 in November and 3 in December 1943 (1), 8 between January and March 1944.

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(1) In the prospectus are indicated 15 missions for 1943, of which 8 are made by Mas. In addition to the 6 mentioned here for the MTB, there was the previous one that had led to the loss of Ms 21 on the night on September 25, 1943 off of Punta Stendardo (Gaeta). The first many missions carried out together with M.T.B. And M.G.B. British, cited by Commander Michelagnoli (paragraph 27) were not counted in the table, because no special missions on the enemy coast would be considered.

In addition to the fleet of special services, worked in Tyrrhenian the V Mas flotilla (cap. freg. [Commander] Enrico Marano) who had its bases in Sardinia. Staying in La Maddalena, after normalizing the situation with the departure of the last German soldier, the fleet could have 7 Mas: 505, 507, 509, 510, 541, 543, 546.

These operated from La Maddalena or Bastia, depending on the location of the target to be reached. The 45 special missions recorded in the table were carried out on the coasts of Tuscany and the islands of the Tuscan archipelago and some on the Ligurian coast, starting from La Maddalena or Bastia, until July 1944, that is, until the Elbe was released and Pianosa with French troops in mid-June 1944, then the other smaller islands of the archipelago and Livorno on July 18, 1944. Particularly numerous were the reconnaissance and special missions on the coasts of Elba in preparation for landing.

The V Mas flotilla enriched the three Ms 24, 52 and 72 in April 1944, as we have said; but the Ms 24 had operated from La Maddalena and Bastia during the winter of 1944, carrying out three special missions.

It also had the contribution of Mas 562 in July 1944. This Mas had been captured by the Germans in the armistice at the Voltri yard where she was in repair. Ceded to the socialist republic, who had employed her under the pseudonym- X Mas flotilla, was clashed on June 30, 1944 in the waters opposite Portoferraio with three American ships; Burned by some shots received, had been abandoned by the crew who had been jumped into the sea; but the fire was immediately extinguished following the commissioning of the fire-fighting device by the chief engineer officer. Captured the Mas and rescued the crew, the Allies handed it over to the Italian Navy. So she became part of the V flotilla, which was able to put it back in efficiency and to man her with a new crew.

In mid-September 1944, she was ready to enter into action, but she did not have the opportunity to do special missions.

By contrast, V flotilla suffered the painful loss of five ships.

Mas 546 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Paolo Jappelli) exploded on a mine during a special mission on 21 February 1944 in the waters of Capraia.

The Mas 541 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Guido Cosulich), departed Bastia, on March 21, 1944, to perform a special mission on the Ligurian coast between Genova and Savona, disappeared before reaching the destination without leaving any trace of itself.

The Mas 505 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Carlo Sorcinelli) had a very painful and despicable fate.

The Mas, part of a squadron based in La Maddalena, had come out to move to Bastia. Besides the Mas's crew, they were aboard ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Primo Sarti (the same man who was in the armistice as the military commander of the *Humanitas* [see paragraph 21 - c] squadron leader and cap. freg. [Commander] Marcello Pucci Boncambi with his attendant, who had a particular mission to accomplish. As soon as he was out of sight from the traffic lights, the crew, with the head officers in a predetermined plan, turned their weapons against the three officers, forcing them to head for the coast of the Italian peninsula. In the face of their refusal, he killed them at point-blank one after the other (while boldly defended themselves) with bursts of gunshots and then headed for Port Santo Stefano, where the mutineers presented themselves to the local German Command. In the memory of the three valiant officers overwhelmed in the struggle, the gold medal was decreed. The Mas, embedded in the pseudo X fleet Mas, carried out some missions at the service of the socialist republic and on April 24, 1945, she was scuttled at Imperia to prevent her from returning to the Navy, which the crew had betrayed for more than a horrible crime, which was then judged by the Military Magistrate.

The Mas 507 and 509 were both destroyed at Bastia on August 12, 1944 by a gas fire, while being moored next to each other, were replenishing.

The only special mission carried out by destroyers in 1944 was to support the assault means operating in the waters of La Spezia (June 21, 1944) and in 1945 in the port of Genoa (April 19, 1945). The destroyers were the *Grecale* and the *Legionnaire* respectively.

*b) Activities in the Adriatic and Ionian.*

In this operating theater, most of the MTB and half of the Mas available in metropolitan waters were concentrated.

After the Cunningham - de Courten agreement was concluded, contacts between the English and Italian Information Services were established to define the ways in which, by means of our small, fast ships, informants in the occupied Italy.

On September 23, 1943 --- date of the agreement - were already, between Taranto and Brindisi, the following ships suitable for this purpose:

- Ms 31, 53, 65 and 73 (in Taranto); 33 and 74 (in Brindisi);
- Mas 432, 434, 514, 516, 517, 519 and 547 (the only one in Taranto, while the others were in Brindisi).

No new ships were added to these Mas, which by 1943 were all concentrated in the Adriatic with logistic support bases in Brindisi, until August 19, 1944, when the four Mas (523,538,540,554) From the dissolved Grupmas of the Levante (see paragraph 35), escorted by DD *Oriani* during the long six-day crossing from Alexandria to Brindisi with short intermediate stops to Augusta and Taranto.

None of Mas was lost; were disarmed for inefficiency and demolished Mas 432 in December 1943 and Mas 517 in December 1944.

As for the MTB - of which the Ms 33 was lost during a mission, while the Ms 53 was stricken in December 1944 - to the two initially present in Brindisi and were added another 10, they were also logistically supported at the base of Brindisi:

- On 10 October 1943, Ms 31, from Taranto;
- On 11 October 1943, Ms 56 and 61, coming from Malta and Ms 65 from Taranto;
- On October 28, 1943, Ms 55, coming from Malta and Ms 53 from Taranto;
- On November 1, 1943, Ms 64, from Taranto (where he came from Malta on 5 October);
- On November 14, 1943, Ms 73, from Taranto;
- On 27 November 1943 the Ms 54 from Malta (1);
- On June 1, 1944, Ms 35, from Taranto (where she came from Malta on 5 October 1943)

The first mission in the Adriatic was that of Mas 514 under the direction of the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Raul Galletti, in charge of Brindisi's section of our information service. Mission, executed

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(1) The Ms 54, on the short stay in Malta of Marshal Badoglio with the Minister of Courten for signing the armistice on 29 September, had embarked with the two High Authorities to allow them to review the Italian ships, which were anchored at Marsa Scirocco.

On October 4, 1943, departing from the Tremiti and disembarking informants on the Abruzzo coast, she had a smooth run.

After this first success, it was decided to establish an advanced support point as far north as possible, in order to shorten the routes and to reduce the likelihood that Ms and Mas would be spotted on the way back and forth, and to save fuel. The choice fell on Termoli, which had been liberated on October 5<sup>th</sup> and was therefore very close to the first lines that passed south of Ortona (liberated in the second half of December 1943).

The first ships based at Termoli were on October 18, 1943, Ms 31, 33 and 74 (commanded by cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Mario Mario Pollina) belonging to the I Flotilla commander by cap. freg. [Commander] Giorgio Manuti. The three ships operated for commandos at the orders of British commander H. R. N. Nichols. The cap. freg. [Commander] Manuti, who went to Termoli on October 23 to inspect the MTB, reported that he had found the proud crews to be able to take on a new kind of activity, but that it would also confirm their fighting qualities in the eyes of the Allies.

In short, Termoli became the main operational point of reference for small ships destined for special missions to the north, and between November and early December 1943 were transferred, in chronological order, also Ms 61, 56, 55, 53, 73, 65, 54.

The technical-logistic support base was moved from Brindisi to Manfredonia at the end of January 1944, exploiting the local shipyards resources completed by military Navy facilities.

When the front reached the Gothic line, the operational base was transferred to Ancona, and the point of support at Senigallia and finally to Port Corsini. Ortona also occasionally served as a starting port for special missions, and so did San Benedetto del Tronto.

From Ancona, they operated Ms 64 and 73 from August 1944, Ms 56 and 55 from September 1944, Ms 65 from November 1944. From Senigallia, the activity began in October 1944 with Ms 64, to which Ms 55 and 65 were added in the following November, Ms 35 and 61 in March 1945 and Ms 31 in April.

In Brindisi the ships were shifted when they were destined for missions on the Albanian and Greek coasts, often supported from Otranto, or they went to return to efficiency in that base provided with adequate means for repairs of each type.

The only ships that never operated from Termoli - but from Brindisi - Otranto or Senigallia alone - were Ms 35 and 64.



Ms 74 left the I flotilla on November 2, 1941 to be used for the transportation of assault means, as has already been mentioned. She returned to Termoli in May 1944 and then went to Tyrrhenian, where she participated in the actions against the ports of La Spezia and Genoa, quoted in paragraph 34, embarking assault means for the first time in Bastia and the second time in Livorno.

During the many missions carried out, many of which - although not special - posed significant risks, the Ms had several occasions to fight or to have to take out fire actions against which they were not in a position to react:

- On the night of November 3, 1943, Ms 31 was sunk by intense fire of automatic weapons stationed on the coast between Ortona and Pescara, during a special mission that he had been going out of Termoli.

- On the night of April 4, 1944, Ms 54 managed to escape intense fire from the ground, after embarking on American informers on the Albanian coast; she sailed from Brindisi.

- Ms 65 and Ms 74, during a long 7-day mission in September 1944 in the waters between Cape Kephali and Corfu, were subjected five times to land: from 09:00 to 10:15 on the 24<sup>th</sup>; from 14:10 to 14:15 on the 26<sup>th</sup>; from 11:50 to 12:05 on the 28<sup>th</sup>; from 19:00 to 19:30 on the 28<sup>th</sup> and from the 12:10 to 12:40 of the 29<sup>th</sup>: they were also leaving from Brindisi and also from Otranto.

- Ms 54 further supported a troop action on the coast in the Antivari area on November 1, 1944, during an anti-ship cruise; Starting point Brindisi,

- Ms 56 supported a fight against an enemy ship during a special mission on the night of November 13, 1944, near the Albanian coast.

- toward 22:30 on April 29, 1945, the three Ms 31, 35 and 61 - left Senigallia for a anti-ship ambush in the Upper Adriatic - they met with an enemy ship (patrol boat or MTB) and forced them to dart away with their fire .

To close this recapitulation of the MTB, Mas and Vas, we include the composition table of the flotillas, which were split up on December 31, 1944, the date after which there were no variants for losses or stricken.

*I Mas Flotilla (base of Brindisi)*

1 <sup>st</sup> sqdn. Mas	434 - 514 - 516 - 519 - 547
3 <sup>rd</sup> sqdn. Ms	31 - 35 - 65 - 73
5 <sup>th</sup> sqdn. Ms	54 - 55 - 56 - 61 - 64

*V Mas Flotilla (La Maddalena base)*

Mas 510 - 543 - 562  
Special services sqdn. Ms 24 - 52 - 74 (in Ischia)

*Ms assigned to the Mezzi Assault Group (in Taranto)*

Ms 74

*Ships in work at Brindisi*

Mas 523 - 538 - 540 - 545 (probably some had finished the work)

*Aggregate Units at the Special Services Squadron (in Ischia)*

Anti-sub ships AS 7 - 18 - 31 - 33 - 34 - 35 - 58 - 67 - 141  
Vas 211 - 218 - 222.

In the Adriatic and Ionian theater, a total of 66 special missions for destroyers, torpedo boats, corvettes and submarines, with a very wide difference in intensity of use of these types of ship compared to those in the Tyrrhenian Sea. This was mainly due to the fact that the east coast of that theater showed the need to prepare the occupation of the Balkans by the Allies, and that for such missions, in relatively remote areas from the national bases with sea crossings often adversarial to MTB and for Mas, it was necessary to use mostly seaworthy ships.

Here is how the missions between the various ships were divided, which were used:

- Destroyers (17 missions):

<i>Artigliere:</i>	2, all in 1944,
<i>Granatiere:</i>	7, “ “ “
<i>Grecale:</i>	3, “ “ “
<i>Oriani:</i>	5, “ “ “

- Torpedo boats	(27 missions):
<i>Aliseo</i> :	3, all in 1944,
<i>Animoso</i> :	11, “ “ “
<i>Ardimentoso</i> :	7, “ “ “
<i>Cassiopea</i> :	1, “ “ “
<i>Indomito</i> :	5, “ “ “
- Corvette	(3 missions):
<i>Ape</i> :	2, all in 1945,
<i>Flora</i> :	1, in 1943 (1);
- Submarines	(19 missions):
<i>Axum</i> :	3, in 1943,
<i>Diaspro</i> :	1, in 1944,
<i>Manara</i> :	1, in 1943,
<i>Marea</i> :	2, in 1943,
<i>Nichelio</i> :	7 (1I in 1943 and 6 in 1944),
<i>Platino</i> :	5, in 1944.

Corvette was poorly used in special missions for their relatively modest speed (maximum 20 knots), which made them too risky to use.

In the execution of their missions, the ships did not encounter enemy contrast (except for a few air strikes during the crossings), except for the DD *Granatiere* and *Oriani*, during one of their five missions in section to bombard coastal areas of Greece and Albania during which they were attacked by 4 German MTBs who they warded off the with fire between 22.:46 and 22:56 on May 2, 1944 while carrying out a fire against Antivari.

#### 45<sup>th</sup> SPECIAL MISSIONS OF THE MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS AND MAS.

We will only describe the missions of particular importance, as they did.

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(1) It was considered a special mission by *Flora* on 9 September 1943 in Taranto when it supported the landing at the fortified work of the "Toscano" battery in the presence of the Germans of a reinforced company (paragraph 26 - a).

*1 - Motosilurante 33 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Renato Bechi).*

The motor torpedo boat left Termoli at 18:15 on November 2, 1943, with some allied paratroopers aboard with their group leader, an English naval lieutenant and some Italian informants. At 23:00 she arrived 300 meters from the coast at Silvi Marina, about 5 miles north of Pescara. While, with the engines stopped, he was about to land the boats, the men transported were invested by machinegun fire and even small guns. Sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Bechi promptly ordered to put the engines in motion to get away and throw smoke bombs into the sea to disguise, but the engines did not start because the compressed air pipe had been hit; one of the helmsmen was killed and another was injured. Bechi then tried to wrap the piping with his hat, but without getting any results. The enemy shooting continued, wounding, among other things, the deputy helmsman at the helm and the radioman, who, however, managed to send the emergency signal,

Meanwhile, several fires had developed and the commander, judging impossible for any fire reaction by his ship, ordered its abandonment, helped the wounded to ascend to the sea and threw himself into the water at last. As the rubber boats loaded with the wounded were also hit and sinking, he returned on board to get some life jacket and succeeded in part, while on the ship wrapped by the flames continued under a hail of projectiles of the machine guns and the fires were setting off the ammunition. He was struck by several splinters, one of which traversed his left arm that was paralyzed. Throwing all the life-jackets that he could take, he threw himself back into the water; he handed his own life-jacket to a wounded NCO and exhorted all the shipwrecks to reach the ground. He also manifested to the men closest to him the intention of returning a second time on board to accelerate somehow the sinking of the MTB, but he did not have the strength to implement his proposal, which in turn with a paralyzed arm would not succeed to complete. Swimming with just one arm approached the beach, with distinctly German voices - stayed in the water to get away, with his feet on the bottom, the most dangerous area, and then reaching the ground. He arrived at a farmhouse, where he was lovingly rescued and then - assisted by locals - he succeeded

with various stratagems and disguises to reach first a small village and then the town of Penne where he was best treated in a hospital. He tried several times in vain to go to the south by passing the lines, which were not far away, along with the deputy helmsman who was wounded in one arm. He succeeded in attempting to reach Pisa where he had the family and where he could avoid any contact with the Nazi-fascists, while the undercover went to Vicenza. Of the other men, who were on Ms 33, most of them - and of course the wounded - were captured and started to concentration camps or work. To sottoten. vasc. Bechi was awarded the silver medal for the military valor; others were also decorated.

The failure of the Ms 33 to return to Termoli had, in the morning of November 3, cast doubt and anxiety to the point that it was cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pollen, embarked on Ms 31, who had carried out a mission in the nearby area, and other British officers boarded on other ships on the same night, had seen at 1:30 a great flush in the direction of Pescara. The Italian Command had no means of communication at its disposal and cap. freg. [Commander] Manuti, who was in Termoli, requested from the local English command for an aerial reconnaissance. Two were made, both with negative results. Even Ms 31, who left Termoli on November 3 and 4 to search for Ms 33, found no trace. Of the fate of Ms 33 there was no news until some of the survivors came back from underground or imprisonment, presenting themselves to a Navy Authority.

Ms 33 had four other missions in the past ten days: October 22-23 and October 26-27, disembarking informants and materials; 27 - 28 October and 30 - 31 October, with the same purpose in addition to that of embarking our English ex-prisoners.

*2 - Motosilurante 31 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Antonio Scialdone).*

The story we are about to say about this motor torpedo boat has been chosen among others of the same genre, because it gives an idea of the insight with which the staff acted when a special mission was needed at all costs.

At 17:00 on October 21, 1943, Ms 31 left Termoli along with the English landing Craft L.C.I. 272 (Landing Craft Infantry, No. 272). Ms 31 had aboard English Colonel Simons, four officers and eight British military personnel. He headed for a creek south of Punta del Moro (south of Ortona), where he also had to embark on some former British prisoners. At a predetermined point

a signal should have been spotted. From the ground was given an alarm, and the ship was targeted by bursts of gun fire and light machine guns. The mission had been postponed and Ms 31 had come to Termoli at 7:00 on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The mission had been retried the same evening, leaving Termoli at 18:05 with aboard besides Col. Simons, Commander Nichols, 4 officers and 3 British soldiers. This time the signal was spotted. The boats were then put into the sea, but for the difficulties encountered when approaching the beach, for the presence of German soldiers, men could not be landed. At 04:00 of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ms 31 had returned to Termoli.

Finally, the mission succeeded, starting from Termoli on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> at 18:10. This time they were on board Commander Nichols, 3 officers and 5 British soldiers. The MTB headed for the mouth of the River Vomano, where at 21:50 disembarked the designated man as an informant with two soldiers and a portable radio station. He then left the area heading for another predetermined point, where at 02:00 on the 25<sup>th</sup> landed on a boat another informant. At 02:10 came the L.C.I. 123, who landed and embarked on 60 ex-prisoners escaped from the concentration camps. At 03:30 the two ships set route together for Termoli, in whose port they entered at 10:30 on October 25.

Particularly important was the mission carried out by Ms 31 during the first two days of November. At 14:00 on 1<sup>st</sup> November, she departed from Termoli, having on board the Flotilla Leader cap. freg. [Commander] Caputi Manuti and about 20 people between officers and personnel of commandos and civilian informants. After recognizing Monte Conero (Ancona), she went on to the Po, Where the identification of the coast was made difficult by the haze. At 01:00 on November 2, after heading straight to 24 knots on the ground with all three engines at half-power, Ms 31 stopped at 800 meters from the low beach near the exact predetermined point and regularly landed men and materials. At 12:00 on November 2, she returned unhurt to Termoli after having traveled a total of 530 miles at an average speed of 25 knots.

The long mission, daring for its own length, also aroused particular satisfaction in the Allied Authorities.

*3 - Motosilurante 61 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Antonio Tedeschi).*

What we are to expound offers interest, not because Ms 61 has encountered contrast by the enemy, but by the intensity of its use performing nine missions in a month.

Arrived at Termoli from Brindisi on November 1, 1943, the Ms 61 left at 18:45 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> with aboard squadron leader cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pollina, Commander Nichols, the English naval lieutenant Martin and some British sailors. When she arrived at 23:10 a half mile north of the Vornano River, he sent four boats to the ground, where he retrieved 16 commandos, who had operated in that area, returning to Termoli at 6:50 of the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

At 19:30 on the same day he departed with Nichols, Martin and 9 commandos. At 21.10, in the vicinity of Pescara, he could not land the commandos for the dense mist that prevented him from identifying the coast. He then led to the mouth of the Vomano in the hope of retrieving two men who had not returned the previous night. After leaving the waiting time for any signaling from the ground, he departed to Silvi in the hope of finding some trace of Ms 33 or its crew. This search was also out of the question, and he returned to Termoli at 06:30 on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

On November 15, he performed a survey of the Tremiti Islands. The purpose of the survey was to find out which support possibilities could provide the small jagged archipelago to a commandos units at the orders of Major Lefroy of the British Army, who he wished to make a base for a Motorsailer at its disposal to operate on the neighboring coasts of the peninsula. The Tremites offered, isolation, the advantage of being able to prepare the actions of the commandos in the absolute secret: for this reason they were chosen by Lefroy.

On 07:05 of the 15<sup>th</sup>, with 3 British officers and 20 commandos on board, Ms 61 reached Tremiti at 09:00. Here he found the L.C.I. 129 at anchor in a cove on the island of St. Nicholas. He had an order to go on to Pianosa, but because of the high rising sea he had to go back and, having disembarked the commandos on the island of San Domino, he took them back on board after they had made the reconnaissance and returned to Termoli at 16:05 the same day.

After a survey carried out on 18 November at the entrance to the canal of the lagoon of Varano (northern coast of Gargano), where the motor sailboat *Tynnus* was sunk, Ms 61 performed another mission on 27-28 November.

Leave Termoli at 20:30 of the 27<sup>th</sup> with the cap. freg. [Commander] Nichols, the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Martin, 3 officers and 8 soldiers of the British Army, met high sea that forced her to reduce speed and return to Termoli

after six hours for not having been able to find in the weather in the meeting with staff to be recovered on the coast.

He departed at 16:10 on the same day of the 28<sup>th</sup> in section with Ms 56, on which was the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pollen together with Nichols. Just outside the harbor, the two Ms set up an anti-sub escort to a convoy of British landing craft toward Ortona. At 16:35, Ms 56 was forced to leave the formation and return to port by breaking a helm rudder; Ms 61 continued the escort on her own, which left - as foreseen - at 18:00 returning to Termoli.

At 16.30 on 29, he took the sea again, still with the cap. freg. [Commander] Nichols, a naval lieutenant and an officer of the English Army with 5 sailors, in addition to an allied Secret Service agent. At 21:00 she landed about 500 meters from the beach south of the Tronto River and sent a boatman to the ground with a sailor and the agent. At 22:15 - while waiting for the return of the boat - was illuminated for a few minutes by a flare launched by an aircraft. At 23:00, not seeing the boat return, Commander Nichols sent a second boat in search, approaching 200 meters from the beach. Towards midnight, Commander Nichols returned aboard without tracing the first boat and decided to return to Termoli, where Ms 61 entered the 04:50 of the 30<sup>th</sup>.

After thirteen hours of stopping in the harbor, Ms 61 resumed with Nichols, an English war correspondent and the usual British sailors. This time he was anchored after midnight in front of Numana, a hundred yards from the ground. Regularly discharged the correspondent of the war and waited in vain for a couple of hours some signs that should have been made from the ground, he sailed back to Termoli at 07:20 on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

On December 4, he successfully proceeded to discharge from the trawler *Tymnus*.

*4 – Mas 516 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Alberto Scaroni) and 519 (sottoten. vasc [Ensign] Giorgio Bobbiese).*

It had been reported to the Italian Commanders, confirmed by soldiers from Dhermi (south of Valona) and landed at Otranto, on the Albanian coast there were about 30 men anxious to repatriate and that from nearby villages in Dhermi it would be possible to gather for a short time a thousand of the shattered. It was added



that for the moment there were no Germans reported in the area, but that feared a short-term expiration. Initially, according to the initial information, Dhermi had been sending two torpedoes, but it was decided to do the operation in two phases: first send a few people to organize the recovery of the stragglers and then carry out the recovery with means proportionate to the number of people to be carried.

Thus, in the evening of December 25, 1943, the two Mas 516 and 519 departed from Brindisi. On the 516, the flotilla commander cap. freg. [Commander] Manuti was boarded, a Major of the Army and a civilian experienced in the area and Albanian interpreter; On the 519 another civilian and a radioman of the SIM (Military Information Service) with a portable radio station.

At 03:15, the two Mas stopped at about 400 meters from the coast near Dhermi. Each detached a boat with the rower and the crew to leave on the ground; The two boats went to the beach about thirty yards away from each other. At 04:00, as the two boats did not return, the Mas approached 200 meters to the coast. The Mas 516 retrieved the boat of the Mas 519, which reported that six or seven people had come up with pocket lamps as soon as the other boat had touched the ground and had therefore given up on landing. No shots or shouts had heard, but the boat had not returned. Commander Manuti returned the boat to the Mas 519, with the order to repeat the landing a little further south, while the 516 was to stay to wait for her boat, approaching the beach again to about 100 meters. He saw numerous lights of pocket lamps, one of which made some reports that did not match any of those agreed. He also called the missing rowing boat with the megaphone, but he did not get an answer. Meanwhile, 519, moving along the coast, tried to send his men to the ground; He could not do it, because the ground lights followed Mas in all her moves. Then Mas 519 returned to 516, Commander Manuti, after a last attempt to trace his boat, at 05:35 decided to leave for Brindisi to not be surprised by dawn in view of the enemy's occupied coast. At 09.25 on the 26<sup>th</sup> the two Mas were back in Brindisi.

The rower of the lost boat, torpedo man Caesar Palmieri, returned after some time to Brindisi by other means.

*5 - Motosilurante 53 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Mario Manusardi) put out of use by misfortune.*

In the night between December 31, 1943 and January 1, 1944, a violent thunderstorm fell on Termoli. Sea violence broke open in the dock of the harbor, removing the catches of Ms 53's. Her commander immediately attempted to bring the motor torpedo boat to a safe harbor, but the engines did not respond and the ship ended up going aground. They produced several flaws that put the motor torpedo boat out of service for long time. Only January 22, 1944 the motor torpedo boat could be freed by Ms 65, refloated and towed 29 in Manfredonia, where it was impossible to put it back in full working order, so that - as we have seen - was decommissioned in December 1944

*6 - Fight against bad weather.*

Ms 65 (ten. vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Corrado Pinotti), transferred from Brindisi to Termoli on January 3, 1944, departed the following day at 19:00 along with Ms 31. The section went to Pesaro, being cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pollina on Ms 31 and cap. freg. [Commander] Nichols on the Ms 65. The sea was shaky, the wind was cool and frequent the squalls, so that in the blind darkest with almost no visibility the two ships at about 22:30 lost contact. The conditions of the weather forced her reverse the route to return to Termoli, but the high seas made it very difficult to take the port. Ms 31, for the particular experience of Commander Pollina, managed to get in the dark at 04:30 on 5<sup>th</sup>, after repeating the maneuver twice. Ms 65, who had inverted the route several hours after Ms 31, returned to Termoli at 11:30. The seaman's skills of ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Pinotti aroused the admiration of the cap. freg. [Commander] Nichols, who, verbally expressing his happiness, wanted to add a letter of update of his admiration. Even for the other commanders, who until then had accompanied him in the various missions, he wanted to express his praise in writing.

On the same day, January 4, at 21:50, they left Termoli for Porto Civitanova also the Ms 54 and 55. Also, at midnight, in the face of the bad weather, they were forced to desist from the mission and to return to Termoli. Given the difficulty - repeated for them - to enter the harbor, Ms 54 was able to enter the beginning of morning twilight, while Ms 55, after having stayed sometime in the pall, came to light.

To the praises addressed to the captains from cap. freg. [Commander] Nichols added the same January 5 letter of satisfaction to F.O.L.I. (Adm. Mc Gregor) to F.O.T.A.L.I. (Adm. Peters). Here is the text:

"Italian Motosiluranti in Termoli - I send an excerpt from the report of the Commander in Chief of the Landing Forces of Termoli - During the period considered I had an average dependency on four Italian motosiluranti. They have demonstrated a true ability and efficiency in all the jobs that have been called to perform. The staff of this Boat has always worked with enthusiasm and high spirits, and its cordial cooperation in every field is very satisfying. "

*7 - Motosiluranti 73 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Alceste Longo).*

From Brindisi on January 14, 1944, at 07:30, he stopped at Manfredonia, where the day after he withdrew from the English unit F.P.N. 2021, specially arrived there, the landing boats, needed for the mission to be carried out in Porto San Giorgio.

Transferred to Termoli, Ms 73 embarked personnel in charge of the mission, including Italian informants and sappers (N.P.), and on the 20<sup>th</sup> - after the storm calmed down which had raged those days - he sailed at 16:00 to Porto San Giorgio.

At 21:10 the boats headed for a beach just south of this town with sappers on board. But at 22: on the coastal railway line a train loaded with ammunition derailed, due to two explosive charges on the rails, and the torpedoes were forced to return to Ms 73. They then sailed and headed for another landing point south of the Tronto. To reach it the motor torpedo boat would have to get around a field of mines equipped with antenna; but to gain time and take advantage of the confusion that had occurred on the ground following the rail attack, he passed very close to the coast with the silenced engine running, within the minefield. At 00:25 of the 21<sup>st</sup> she happily landed the staff and returned to Termoli, continuing to Brindisi after he left for Manfredonia to return the boats to the English ship.

*8 - Ms 54 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Marcello Ivonetti), Mas 516 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Scaroni) and 547 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Paolo Vanzetti), TB Ardimentoso (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Domenico Ravera).*

This was the first complex operation with various types of ships, for the recovery of many Italian soldiers on the Albanian coast. It was accomplished in just 18 hours.

The Motosilurante [MTB] and the two Mas left Brindisi for Otranto at 14:00 on January 21, 1944: on the Ms 54 was the cap. freg. [Commander] Manuti and the Major of the Army Branca. Embarked at Otranto on Ms 54, a subject of Albania knowable in the destination sites, the three ships went straight to the Strade Bianche (south of Valona) to land on a predetermined spot near Dhermi, joined at the beginning of the crossing by the TB *Ardimentos* from Taranto.

Arriving in the area, the Ms 54 approached alone to 500 meters from the ground anchoring in 10 meters of water at 21:05. He sent a boat to the coast with Major Branca and an officer of the motor torpedo boat, and another boat with the Albanian passenger. Half an hour later, both of them returned on board, reporting that they had not seen anyone. Major Branca expressed the doubt that the point touched was not the exact one. Ms 54 then went on the scouting the coast to the south without recognizing any point of reference and without seeing anyone. Back to the north, he met the *Ardimentos*-Mas group, who had been waiting, and the four ships continued to go north. At 23:50, from Ms 54, which was in the head, was seen a mountain spur overlooking the sea with an adjacent beach.

The Major Branca was sent to the ground and this time, at just 200 meters from the previous landing point he found the soldiers sought. It was started immediately, bringing together all the men on the *Ardimentos*: there were a total of 194 people, including 10 officers and 180 soldiers, a Naval Officer, an Italian civilian, and two Albanian civilians. Their material condition was miserable, but their morale was rather good and contact with our ships refreshed the spirits that passed from concern to exultation.

At 03:00 the ships resumed their return journey; Two hours after the *Ardimentos* went on to Taranto, while motor torpedo boat and Mas headed for Brindisi where they entered at 07:30 on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

8 bis - Ms 54, Ms 55 (*sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Carlo Ercolessi*), Mas 516 and 547, TB *Indomito* (*cap. Corv. [Lt. Commander] Emanuele F. Perucca*).

Similar to the previous one was the mission accomplished, always with the presence on Ms 54 of cap. freg. [Commander] Manuti, between 3 and 4 February by the five ships listed above.

In front of Otranto the motosiluranti [MTB] and Mas with the *Indomito* (coming from Taranto) at 19:00 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, the group set course for the Albanian coast.

The Ms 54 was in poor condition due to the fact that during the Brindisi-Otranto crossing she had an engine failure. Commander Manuti ordered that the two officers of the Army - Major Branca and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Saudis - embarked on the Mas and that they preceded the other ships, so that the meeting of the military to be recovered would be possible in advance.

Ms 54 had two more engine failures, forcing the other two ships that accompanied her to frequent speed variations.

Meanwhile, the Mas, after recognizing the Strade Bianche at 20.15, had directed to Dhermi by sending the boats with the two Army officers at 21:15 to a point on the beach above which hand grenades were seen. The two officers found them assembled and began to send them on the Mas: boarding was made difficult by the modest capacity of the boats and the agitation of the soldiers, accentuated by the proximity of German troops that during the day had made a sweep in the area. When at 22:30 the three largest ships arrived, boarding continued more quickly with the torpedo boats. At 23:45, after boarding, the naval group headed for return with 258 people centered on the *Indomito*, including a woman with a little girl born a few days before. At 05:00 on February 4, the two motosiluranti entered Brindisi, while the two Mas - after escorting the *Indomito*, headed to Taranto, first stopping at Otranto - arrived at 05:30.

The good success of these two first military recovery operations from Albania had favorable repercussions in the Italian environments. Marshal Messe (succeeded on 18 November 1943 Gen Ambrosio in the office of Chief of General Staff) wrote to the Navy Chief of Staff the following letter on February 7, 1944:

"I have taken note with satisfaction of the happy outcome of the recovery of fellow countrymen from the Albanian coasts carried out by the ships of the R. Navy, and please give to the commanders and the crews who participated in my lively praise. And the mastery of the commanders is a sure promise that the fraternal work will be persevered in favor of the compatriots, who in tragic conditions await on the other side for help and the comfort of the Homeland."

*9 - Fortunate rescue of two officers.*

At 17:45 on January 25, 1944, Ms 31 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Scialdone) left Termoli to recover some former British prisoners in Porto San Giorgio: there were three British officers on board and Major g.n. Paolo Tenti, chief of the naval Engineers of the fleet. Arriving in the area at 23:10, having not seen any of the agreed signals, the motosilurante directed to return to Termoli.

At 00:45, he saw a drifting small cutter who was making rescue signals. He approached and took on board two men who were there. The first contacts were distrustful, because the two men - who were the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Mario Luciano and the sottoten. art. [2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of the Artillery] Loris Lorenzetti feared to have been on board a ship in the service of the Germans and since the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Scialdone could not understand the strange circumstances of the encounter with the two officers, who said they had come to the sea to fish and be surprised by the bad weather. Personal acquaintance between the Major Tenti and the sottoten. vasc. Luciano put an end to the doubt and it was so obvious that the sottoten. vasc. Luciano, arrived in Ancona from Fiume after the armistice with the Sub *Ametista* (see paragraph 22-b) and remained clandestine in Numana until he was sure that he could no longer hide himself in the search for the Germans, had decided to try to escape to the south. Not having been able to get in touch with Adm. Aldo Ascoli (who with a group of relatives and acquaintances had left the evening of November 15, 1943 on a fishing trawler from the town of Arenile near Porto Recanati to reach the liberated territory and make himself available to the Legitimate Government, which he managed to do it), he had procured an old cutter, that had best plugged the hull that was leaking water and had taken to the sea together with his friend 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Lorenzetti, and headed south to resume service. The bad conditions of the hull and the strong wind had not allowed, after unsuccessful attempts, to navigate with sails. Each activity of the two officers had been absorbed by the need to get the water out of which at the time of the meeting with Ms 31 the cutter was half full. In fact, the cutter went sank with officer's baggage, as soon as they left it to cross over to the MTB. The two officers had with them numerous letters from former British prisoners and Italian acquaintances.

Ms 31 returned to Termoli at 05:45 on January 26, handing over the two officers - as it was necessary - to the British authorities of

Termoli, who, after interrogating them, started them to the Foggia concentration camp. Here, after a further 24 hours of exhaustive interrogation, they were allowed to appear before the Italian Authorities. They can then resume service immediately.

*10 - A series of continuous missions (from January 26 to March 24, 1944)*

For this series of missions, Generalmas wrote on March 24 to the Flotilla Command:

"The Excellency Minister of the Navy has sent me, expressing his satisfaction, a copy of the following letter received from FOLI: "I have the pleasure to draw your attention to the good work recently done by some ships of the Italian Navy operating in the Adriatic. Ms 73 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Longo) and Ms 65s (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Pinotti) successfully carried out a large number of missions, and it was not their fault, as well as Ms 64 (ten. vasc. c. [Lieutenant] Riavini) and Ms. 31 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Scialdone), if no further successes have been achieved, because this has happened because of the bad weather, I would be grateful if you did not have anything against it, if you would like to express to the officers and staff above My congratulations for the good work they are doing. "I express to you the Commanders and the crews my delight - de Courten".

It consisted of 29 missions in 54 days almost-always under adverse conditions of the sea (which were added to the contemporary ones already described in the previous two paragraphs and the four missions of the 56, 54 and 74 between 20 and 22 March, for a total of 35 missions).

Here is the chronology, indicating the dates corresponding to the nights on which missions were made, or interrupted when the weather was prohibitive.

- January 26: Ms 73 landed at the mouth of the Chienti (one mile south of Porto Civitanova) five Italian sappers. Was aboard the English Naval Lieutenant Laming.

- January 29: Ms 31 escorts Ms. 53, freed after running aground at Termoli, during her trail up to Manfredonia.

- January 29: Ms 73 landed informants and sappers on the coast of the Marche.

- 17, 21, 22, 23 February: Ms 31 should have carried out a mission for "A – Force" (a British organization for the retrieval of former prisoners or stragglers in occupied territories

by the Germans), but every time she had to return after tiring sailing due to the high sea. She had aboard Major Lefroy and the Italian junior officers, sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Mario Manusardi of Ms 53 and Lieutenant d.m. Ivo Potenza, engine chief of the squadron, plus A - Force personnel. During the first attempt on February 17, the sea causes a leak in the bow, but can return to the port because the collision bulkhead holds perfectly.

- February 23: Let's just say this mission, because it joins with the last exit at Ms 31 that should have, together with Ms 64 and 65, land a large group of agents and informers. The three motosiluranti [MTB], reunited at sea at the Tremiti, have to forgo the mission because of the sea and return to Manfredonia.

- 18, 22, 23, 27, 29 February: Ms 65 performs six exits at sea to carry out a mission of interest to I.S.N. (Navy Intelligence Service), but bad weather does not allow the completion.

- March 1: Ms 65 attempts a seventh exit to sea for A-Force, but persistent bad weather forces her back to base.

- March 4 and 5: Ms 64 carries out a mission to Porto Comisa (Lissa Island) by disembarking English personnel and retiring.

- March 15: Ms 64 goes to the Tremiti to ascertain the condition of the motor sailboat *Adua*, which can not be repaired on the spot will have to be towed to another base.

- March 17 and 18: Ms 65, left Ortona with A-Force personnel, reaches the mouth of the Conca (near Cattolica) at 00:10 of the 18<sup>th</sup>. There is a small steamer heading northwest with modest speed and the commander, agreeing with the British mission chief, decides not to attack her immediately to give priority to the landing of A - Force men. As soon as they get in landing order, you see signs of bright lights on the coast, followed a few minutes after the shooting of flares. The Ms 65 then moves away at high speed, abandoning the landing of men and pursuing the steamer. She returns to Manfredonia after stopping in Tremiti.

- March 19: Ms 64 (squadron chief Pollina aboard, 4 Italian informants and 14 British soldiers) landed at 00:06 of 19<sup>th</sup>, half the personnel near the mouth of the Tenna. At 00:30, in



following a few bursts of machine gun fire that partially come close to the Ms, this one, just recovering the return boats, renounces to land the second half of the men and returns to Manfredonia after leaving the English personnel who were unable to land at Tremiti .

- March 20: Ms 56 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Leonardo Zanoni) leaves at 01:10 six informants on the Marzocca beach.

- March 21 and 22: Ms 65, destined for an A-Force mission from the Tremiti, is sent to rescue the shipwrecked of an American plane drowning in the sea near Pianosa. After unsuccessful search returns to the Tremiti and the following day (22) recovers 10 American aviators of B. 17 n. 579 downed off the island of San Domino (Tremiti). Then embarked four British officers and four soldiers, on March 23 he landed two - with the commission of saboteurs - at the mouth of the Tenna and then, returned the Tremiti the 10 aviators, and took them to Manfredonia.

- 21 and 22 March: Ms 56 at 23:00 on the 21<sup>st</sup> landed 6 commandos near Rimini; At 00:50 of the 22<sup>nd</sup> they return on board after having committed a demolition and Ms 56 comes to Ortona at 04:00 of the same 22<sup>nd</sup>.

- March 22: Ms 56 departs Ortona at 18:25 to rescue the crew of another American aircraft and finds him full (10 men) on two inflatable boats. Returning to Ortona the same night, he receives two telegrams of thanksgiving and praise for the rapid and successful rescue carried out "in difficult conditions": one from N.O.I.C. Ortona and one from F.O.T.A.L.I.

- March 22: Ms 54 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Marcello Ivonetti) and Ms 74 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Piero Carminati) carry out a mission of landing materials and retrieval of personnel on the Albanian coast:

Ms 54 - with the flotilla commander Manuti aboard- leaves Brindisi at 16:00 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and goes to Otranto to meet with Ms 74 from there to Taranto, aboard: cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Benedetto Luchetti of the Department Commander in Chief, the English Naval Lieutenant Stanley, the American Lieutenant (jg) Eller, the British Army Captain Wight, the Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> class signalman Albano Prele of the TB *Ardimentoso* (who had already carried out the torpedo boat the operation with the mission already described) 8 daring raiders of our Navy and 2 students from the Naval Academy (Giorgio San Giorgio and Vittorio Pescatori) volunteers for the mission to be accomplished.

At 18:26 the two motosiluranti leave Otranto with a bow on Strade Bianche.

The exceptional darkness of the night with frequent rainfall makes it impossible to maintain visual contact between the two ships, so that after 02:15 the two motosiluranti continue on the route independently of each other. She had taken the head of the section at 09:10 the Ms 74 because Lieutenant Stanley's knowledge of the area was more than cap. freg. [Lt. Commander] Manuti sure to recognize the coast.

At 21:43, the Ms 74 detects a light on the ground, but noting that it is not the agreed signal goes along the coast. At 21:50 he recognizes Punta Sant'Andrea and at 21:55 he receives the predetermined signal. Ms 74 stops the engines and responds with the countersign. Darkness is so deep that the motosilurante detects that it is almost on the ground only when a flashlight illuminates a rock spur 10 meters away. The motosilurante touches the bottom slightly and moves away with the engines. At 150 meters from the beach it drops anchor and preparations for the landing of men and materials. Disembarkation is made difficult by the hatch: but the first shipment of the three boats returns on board at 23:00, having recovered the Major Smith U.S.A., three women of the US Army auxiliary and six armed Albanians. The back and forth of the boats are repeated eight times and in the meantime Ms 74 approaches the ground to about 50 meters. At 00:30 of the 22<sup>nd</sup> the operations are over and Ms 74 starts running at the request of the Lieutenant Stanley, to Otranto where the staff had to be landed. Ms 74 then returns to Taranto at 07.35 on the same day.

The Ms 54, that during the operations performed by Ms 74 had patrolled off the coast to prevent surprises of naval ships, also directs to Otranto and come in view of the port lets his partner enter and continues to Brindisi, where it enters at 05:30.

#### 11. - *Motosilurante 54.*

The Ms 54 at 20:15 on 3 April 1944 left Brindisi, having aboard three men from the US Secret Service and two students from the Naval Academy. She had to be at 03:00 at Cape Rodoni (southern end of the Gulf of Drin) to recover three American informants. Since the information provided the area as safe, the motosilurante - arrived a little early - threw the raft at 02:45 in 7 meters of water 600 meters from the ground with the intention of

approach closer as soon as the agreed signal is given. At 03:10, a white flare was fired, which was immediately interpreted as a German alarm signal. Without waiting for a moment the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Ivonetti cut the anchor and started the engines back to prevent the propellers from slipping into the wire at the end of the anchor chain. From the ground was fire opened with machine guns and machine pistols; The fire did not come from the beach, but from locations halfway up the coast on the small hills that overlook it. The well directed shooting was about to hit the motosilurante, continuing the retrograde march, but commander Ivonetti, having perceived the danger, suddenly changed the maneuver by putting the engines ahead, which inevitably caused an approach to where the weapons were shooting but allowed shortly after to present the stern to the coast and to move away at maximum speed, zigzagging, without suffering any harm. The motosilurante had abstained from any reaction, in order to avoid the flames of his own machine guns and that of the smoke buoy to facilitate the targeting of the enemy. Turned on the heading to Brindisi, arrived at 07:30 on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

To sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Ivonetti, who in the mission of three days earlier, immediately after landing the informants destined to be recovered on April 4, had seen some light passing around the beach and had heard barking of dogs and imperious voices, there was the doubt that informants had been captured immediately after landing and that the communications they sent to be withdrawn were apocryphal and intended to attract Ms into an ambush. The brightness of the night had facilitated the execution of his plan to the enemy. Only the immediate and proper maneuvers had saved the motosilurante, and the fleet command commended Commander Ivonetti, but he concluded that such missions on clear nights were too risky and therefore to be avoided.

*12 - Missions that recommend variants in the execution mode.*

On the night of April 20, 1944, Ms 56 and 61, during two contemporary independent missions (one at the mouth of Tenna and the other little south of Recanati), both went out of their way to encounter enemy motosiluranti. Ms 56 spotted a German MTB who pass her with counter bearing at 500 meters away and managed to hide herself by the nearby shore; Ms 61 heard Engines that moved up and down the coast.

Following this apparent revelation of the presence of a Germanic MTB along the Adriatic coast, the flotilla command suggested that the special missions should always be accomplished by at least two motosiluranti in pairs and no longer by isolated Ms.

The proposal was immediately accepted and applied, so that the same two motosiluranti carried out two new missions on the night on 22 and 26 April, disembarking American informants and British sappers on the coastal area of Senigallia and Falconara, starting from Ortona.

Another mission, which highlighted the inability of the Mas and Vas to work together, was that accomplished by leaving Otranto from Mas 547 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Paolo Vanzetti) and Vas 246 in the night on May 14, 1944.

The two ships meet in Otranto, the Mas coming from Brindisi and the Vas from Taranto on May 13, and at sunset they left for the island of Merlera, where Vas had to land some informants. The Mas took an escort position for the Vas.

Completed the mission was found, given the strong disparity between the normal and silent slopes of the two types of ships – Mas Cruising speed 30 knots and silent with the auxiliary engines 6 knots; Vas cruise speed 16 knots, critical for the Mas, and silent 12 knots -, the continued use of Mas and Vas was not convenient and that the escort of Vas would have to be entrusted to the motosiluranti.

### *13 - Ms 74 works intensely with the assault means.*

Ms 74 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Piero Carminati), who had been adapted to the use of assault means, had left Taranto on May 16, 1944 at 05:30, when he arrived at Termoli at 18:00. He had on board a motorboat of type M.T.S.M. (1), the two assault means operators ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Luigi Cugia and mechanical chief Luigi Zoppis, two Navy officers and one English officer.

On 17<sup>th</sup> at 17:50 Ms 74 left Termoli, embarking here also an officer of our Army in civilian dress and one of the British Army.

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(1) The M. T.S.M. motorboats, created in 1941, were 8.4 meters long, 32 knots and 200 miles range, carrying a torpedo (short torpedo) and two jet bombs [Depth Charges]. Their maximum weight in war was 3 tons, including 550 kilograms of the torpedo and two bombs together. The motosiluranti could put them in the water by a slide, but she could not recover them.

The purpose of the mission was to land the allied three naval officers and make hydrographic recon around the mouth of Tenna. It was supposed to be accompanied by Ms 61, but this ship had just disappeared out of the harbor and Ms 74 went on its own, arriving shortly after the 19:00 the Mas 514 (gmr. [Midshipman] Pier Luigi Antonini) sent immediately to replace Ms 61 as escort.

At 22:20, Ms 74, near the designated area, began operations to land the M.T.S.M., While the Mas 514 patrolled off the coast. At 22:27, he launched the motorboat, Ms 74 headed toward the ground and kept them in tow. At 00:55 of the 18<sup>th</sup>, he thought he was exactly on the predetermined point dropping the anchor. The M.T.S.M., with the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Cugia as the first pilot (commander) and Zoppis as the second pilot, heading to the beach carrying the five officers mentioned. But at 02:00 the speedboat came back under Ms 74 because the seven men on board were not sure of the exactitude of the landing point and then ten. vasc. Cugia, worried about compromising the safety of the vehicle with an out-of-pocket attempt and not having enough night time to try to eliminate doubts about the accuracy of the position, had decided to postpone the mission.

Subsequent similar missions in the same place confirmed that the landing point was correct, and this statement gives an idea of the difficulties that sometimes these missions presented, of the meticulous preparation needed and of the great experience required of the planners and operators.

And in fact, the proof of landing was two days later, when Ms 74 escorted by Ms 64, repeated the mission with full success. This time, the commander of M. T.S.M. was gmr. [Midshipman] Carlo Coda and the second pilot, the sottocapo [petty officer] Luigi Gattorno, and the five previous officers had been joined an English navy officer and a local civilian officer. The M.T.S.M. landed part of the officers on the beach and with the others he carried out the hydrographic survey. On the return route, with a somewhat shaky sea, the tow of the M. T.S.M. (Which could not be reloaded again on board) offered some difficulty, but the expedition returned to Termoli without accidents at 06:55 on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

On the same day at 17:20, Ms 74 took to the sea with Ms 61 who was escort through the navigation. He had on board M.T.S.M with the same pilots of the first unfinished mission and allied and national personal.

The target was always the area around the mouth of the Tenna. At 00:30 of the 21<sup>st</sup> the M.T.S.M. headed to the beach on which he landed with the aid of a towed rubber boat, four of the five allied officers from the Ms 74; At 01:45, the return trip to Termoli with Ms 61 in the led was restarted, Ms 74 in the center, the M.T.S.M. in a navigational queue with its own engine.

At 02:40 Ms 74 missing the M.T.S.M., stopped and when it arrived, to avoid the accident again, he took in tow. There was a little wave motion, and as speed had been reduced, the tow was not easy. Towards 06:30, one mile from Termoli, another M.T.S.M. exited from Termoli with gmr. [Midshipman] Coda communicated to the Ms 74 to bring him close aboard of the DD *Grecale*, who arrived from Bari the previous evening. The destroyer (who had already carried out some missions combined with the M.T.S.M from Taranto or Brindisi) lifted the M.T.S.M. and put it in the deck of Ms 74, then going to Manfredonia.

After three days of rest - during which, in place of Ms 74, they operated in two missions the Ms 64 with the American motorboat PB. 402 and the Ms 61 with the same motorboat - Ms 74 made four more missions on nights on 25, 26, 27 and 29 May 1944. Then moved to Tirreno to participate in the activity of assault means culminating on June 21, 1944 in action against the yard and the base of La Spezia.

During the return journey to Termoli from the mission of the 25<sup>th</sup>, completed along with Ms 64 landing and recovering English sappers near Falconara at the end of their sabotage action, the Ms had been escorted by two Spitfire fighter planes.

*14 - The Ms 31 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Sceddian) and 64 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Riavini) in action against a railway train.*

The Ms 31 in May 1944 had been inactive at Manfredonia for work and engine tests. On June 8 she moved to Termoli. On 19 June, having boarded the N.O.I.C. Termoli, an American Naval Lieutenant, 3 officers and 10 men of the English sapper unit with their materials, left Termoli at 12:25, following the leader Ms 64 and, after refueling at Ortona, continued in section with Ms 64 at 17:20 for the assigned area.

At 21:30 the two motosiluranti were over flown by a landed based aircraft and at 22:05 saw at Rimini three flares and flames of explosions and tracers from anti-aircraft fire.

At 23.30, the motosiluranti approached the coast with a silent pace, taking soundings: on the ground there were many white lights along the coastal road. At 23:40 ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Riavini, acknowledged the predetermined point 2.5 miles north of Fano, gave Ms 31 freedom to maneuver to execute the mission. Upon the request of the American Naval Lieutenant, the two ships moved to operate south of the sighted lights: 80 meters from the beach, the sappers did not care to land because of the excessive proximity of the village of Fano and the two ships moved 3 miles further north making a new landing. At 00:10 on June 20, the motosiluranti anchored 100 meters from the ground. The sappers went down the coast, returning aboard shortly afterwards to say that a long train was stationary on the railway line. It was also decided to try the planned action against the rails, and therefore they returned to the ground, but had to forbid to act for the presence throughout the train of numerous German soldiers.

Then it was thought to make a further attempt to the north, which was successfully executed at 01:15. The sappers returned aboard, the Ms returned, they met, and ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Riavini agreeing with the American Naval Lieutenant embarked on Ms 31 decided to carry out a fire action against the train.

The two ships, standing in line of row with Ms 64 at the head, then passed at a slow speed with a south course 200 meters from the ground and opened fire on the still stationary train.. The rapid and precise fire lasted five minutes, from 01:36 to 01:41. The machine guns of the motosiluranti fired 348 shots, causing the explosion of a tanker full of gasoline, numerous other small fires and the destruction of a switching cabin. No adverse reaction. As soon as the fire came to a halt, the Ms turned and then set route for Termoli, where at 08:30 they were moored.

Despite the difficult conditions encountered and the opportune and courageous initiative of firefighting against the train, and the good luck obtained by the sappers deserved a generous praise from Generalmas to the two commanders.

*15 - Ms 35 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Carlo Niccolini) and Ms 55 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Carlo Ercolessi).*

In this mission, performed on the night of June 27, 1944, British Army captain Kennedy lost his life.

The two motosiluranti departed from Brindisi in the evening of 26 June. Ms 55 had a unit of allied personnel to embark at

Corfu; The Ms 35 had the job of escorting. After landing on the island of Fano, the Ms 55 approached the landing area, while Ms 35, for a equivocal interpretation turning of pulled in the opposite direction, missed the Ms 55 and she was not seen again, even though he stayed almost two hours in the landing area; then, as from the deliveries received before leaving, she returned alone to Brindisi.

Ms 55, at 24:00 in the waters near the landing area, pointed to the south of the set point for the landing of the cannons and machine guns. At 01:15 she stopped 300 meters from the ground. To speed up operations, the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Ercolessi - agree with the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Clarence leader of the expedition - he put into the sea the boat of the motosilurante, much more capable than a rubber. They took the place of departure with the materials and two English officers as escorts. At 01:45 we perceived from aboard of the Shouting of "Who goes there?" in German, followed by noise from shots against the landing unit. Then the shot is also directed against the motosilurante.

The agreements with the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Clarence predicted that in the case of fire action the motosilurante would move away from the shot, but the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Ercolessi decided to stay moving the ship in front of some rocks against which it was projected, remaining less visible from the ground.

All the coast was in alarm and heard from the south shouts and noises. At 02:15 the boat returned under the side with the body of Captain Kennedy aboard and a seriously injured officer, as well as with all the operators. Embarking the men and the materials, the motosilurante went off at 02:30 docking at 06:54 of the 27<sup>th</sup> at the quay of the English Command of Brindisi to disembark the body and the wounded. The behavior of the sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Ercolessi, aroused the admiration of the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Clarence.

On the evening of 28 the same Ms landed at Cape Orso with other British sappers, charged with sabotaging a battery. The following night they returned to recover them, coinciding with the bombardment of the same battery by three English destroyers. Everything was done as scheduled and the two motosiluranti returned to Brindisi on the morning of June 30th.

### *16 - Piloting an Allied Convoy.*

The sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Leonardo Zanoni. (Commander of Ms 56) was commissioned on 27 July 1944 to pilot an allied convoy, which departed



from Monopoli had to transfer near Porto Palermo a unit destined to operate against the German garrison of Himara (Albania).

The convoy was made up of four English L.C.I.L. n. 170, 101, 186, 236; it departed from Monopoli with sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Zanoni on board the 170 to the 08:00 of the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, following coastal routes up to Otranto; the convoy speed was 9 knots.

At Brindisi's crossing, they met the convoy, with the task of escorting, two British Mas and four American Mas.

At about 23:30, shortly before arriving at the landing site, they saw the searchlight of a enemy patrol boat or motor torpedo boat looking at Corfu from the sea for about twenty minutes. At 24:00 the landing at the established beach was completed; There were about 400 commandos disembarkations and abundant war material (explosives, field guns, automatic weapons, etc.). At 05:00 on the 29<sup>th</sup>, two big British DD and a dozen Spitfire fighters came in. The first ones began the bombarding of Himara, while the Spitfire bombed the same position. The destroyer fired about 50 salvos.

At 15:00, after commanding the operations of the commandos with the destruction of the telemetry station and the fortified enemy station of Himara, the commandos returned aboard with about sixty German prisoners, a number of civilians and Italian soldiers gathered in the area, in addition to some wounded. At 15:50 the expedition, escorted by the two destroyers, resumed navigation returning to Monopoli at 07:00 on July 30<sup>th</sup>.

We have reported this mission because it shows how much esteem and confidence the commanders of our motosiluranti had gained from the Allied Authorities, so that they would ask them as experienced pilots for coasts in enemy hands.

*17 - An operational cycle in preparation for allied landings in Albania. (Operation "Mercerized").*

Let us recall here the first cycle of missions carried out from 20 to 30 September 1944 by Ms 65 and 74, under the command of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Vincenzo Fusco commanding the base of Brindisi, in the framework of the preparation of allied landings in Balcania. The missions had the dual aim of landing sappers in charge of "preparing" the ground for landings and performing hydrological surveys to ascertain the possibility of landing the L.C.I. (Landing Craft Infantry).

The missions we are about to describe were carried out in three stretches of the Albanian coast conventionally called "Nan Beach", "Sugar Beach" and "Mystery Beach" (in the coastal area of Port Palermo - Cape Kephali - Santi Fortanta, in the succession indicated from north to south ).

On the night of September 20, Ms 65 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Corrado Pinotti) landed at Sugar Beach 8 British sappers, who stayed on the ground, and a British Naval Lieutenant and a sailor who, after sounding the waters near the beach, returned to the Ms 65, who returned to Brindisi, from where he had departed.

And now, given the complexity of the operations, let's say the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Fusco, bringing back excerpts of his report.

"On the morning of September 22, I was called to Maridipart Taranto to receive verbal orders for subsequent operations.

"F.O.T.A.L.I. demanded for the night on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to send two sailors to Sugar Beach for medical transportation and boarding and transporting to Italy from this area of any injured in the action that should have taken place on the same night.

"None being ready but only the Ms 65 among the ships of the Mas Base Brindisi, Maridipart decided to send from Taranto the Ms 74 ... On Ms 65 would be on board the English Navy Lieutenant Levy for connections ... "

Due to the adverse weather and subsequent communication of the British authorities, the mission was postponed until the 24<sup>th</sup>.

"At 05:15 of the 24<sup>th</sup> the section Ms 65 and 74 [ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Carminati] left Otranto for Sugar Beach. With me on board Ms 65, it was Navy Lieutenant Levy.

"From the area of operation there was a convoy of three English L.C.I. escorted by an English "L" class destroyer.

"The Navy Lieutenant Levy asked to be transshipped to L.C.I. 245 to make arrangements and get information. At 06:40, following that meeting, Navy Lieutenant Levy returned to the Ms 65 asking me to bring the Ms 74 back to Otranto to load food and as much gas as possible for the motosiluranti who would have expected further developments on Sugar Beach.

"I ordered Ms 74 to go back, to get that load and to reach Sugar Beach.

"The stretch of Albanian coast from the bay of Spila (3 miles northwest of Port Palermo) to the bay of Santi Quaranta is to be considered the theater of operations.

"A first landing of about 700 men took place on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> by three L.C.I.s, escorted by two "L" destroyers, on Sugar Beach (1.5 miles north of Cape Kephali). First penetration at this point was 4 to 5 kilometers.

"Other secondary landings have subsequently occurred, either by means of L.C.I., or by rafts towed by the *Animoso* and the *Indomito*, or by means of Ms 65 and 74, in the bay of Spila at Nan Beach (3 miles south of Port Palermo) and Mistery Beach (2 miles south of Cape Kephali, just north of Santi Fortanta).

It turned out that the Germans had set up mined fields on the ground, probably some unknown minefields at sea, batteries at the far north-east of Corfu, and an 88 mortar on the east side of Sugar Beach. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup>, an English destroyer had met five Germanic MTB in the waters of the operations area, hit one (perhaps sunk) and forced the others back to Corfu.

"At 09.00 o'clock of the 24<sup>th</sup> entered with the Ms 65 into the bay off Sugar Beach.

Almost at the same time the German battery of Santa Caterina (Corfu) point opens the fire on the bay and adjusts the shot at the mouth ... After taking aboard a group of sappers [to carry to Nan Beach] I leave the bay at 10:05.

"The Santa Caterina Battery adjusts the shot on the motosilurante. I judge the fire coming from 4 pieces of 152 fired in pairs. The shot is fairly straight and the nearest pair falls short 100 meters from the ship. No damage is caused by the splinters. At Nan Beach, the sappers operate on the ground from 10:55 to 14:00. After retrieving them I head for the return to Sugar Beach ...

"Returning at 16:30 I go ashore with Navy Lieutenant Levy to get in touch with the landing force commander and to conclude the operations on the night and the next day".

On the ground they tell Commander Fusco that the sailors would have to carry the wounded and make any rapid transfer of forces from one point to another in the theater of operations; As well - with caution due to the need to avoid sudden meetings with friendly ships - watching, when necessary, the channel between Corfu and Santi Fortanta to intercept enemy traffic.

"At 02.25 of 25 comes to Sugar Beach Ms 74 coming from Otranto with the ordered cargo and with General Brigadier Davis ... I sent the commanders of the two MSs the order of operation regarding the latest requests from the Navy Lieutenant Levy.

"According to the plan, Ms 74 then makes a landing of sappers and materials at Nan beach, then goes on to Himara for the purpose of embarking on the mules that should have been assembled. That gathering had not happened, Ms 74 came to Sugar Beach.

"At the same time with Ms 65 I carry the landing of 2 cannons, 6 tons of ammunition, a variety of materials and a commando unit at Nan Beach. Then I return to Sugar Beach ...".

On March 26, Commander Fusco with Ms 65 goes to Brindisi, bringing Brigadier General Davis and four officers. Then he travels to Taranto to take directions on the mission and, due to the heavy rainfall caused by a sirocco, returns one day later returning to Sugar Beach.

"Ms 74, who remained at Sugar Beach, performs in the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, despite the unfavorable weather, the planned landing operation at Nan Beach. He then goes to Sugar Beach, where he is asked Captain Peter of the landing forces to carry out transport of materials to Mystery Beach. The ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Carminati communicates to this officer the orders received by me and requires - if the mission is deemed indispensable - the written order of Brigadier General Churchill [top commander of the landing forces].

"While a confirmation of this mission is awaiting wave caused by a sudden squall broke the mooring of Ms 74. The violent surf that beats in the bay does not allow us to remain there. Ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Carminati therefore decided to move immediately to Port Palermo ... On the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> he came to Sugar Beach, taking advantage of a slight calm. Here he reports that he has to return to Port Palermo for bad weather and resumes after recovering that part of the crew left on the ground the previous night for the sudden departure.

"With Ms 65 I went at 07:25 of the 27<sup>th</sup> from Brindisi to Otranto; I embark ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Levy and continue at 10:15 for Sugar Beach. From Port Palermo I see, exit and join the Ms 74. Together we anchor at Sugar Beach at 13:40. Ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Levy goes

ashore for connections. I get on board the Ms. 74's commander, who relates the facts of the previous day.

"At 14:10, while still aboard the MS 65 ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Carminati, a German 88 mortar battery opens fire on the units and the bay from the hills of the interior. Three salvos fall to about 10 meters from the ships. The order to spin for the eye and leave immediately. The Ms 74's helmsman directs the maneuver of that ship. I move the ships to Nan Beach, where I have gas and oil supply to the Ms 74.

"The splinters of the 88 have caused a slight injury to the Ms 65 and slight damage to the superstructures of Ms 74. From Nan Beach I can not in any way communicate with Sugar Beach, I therefore decide to return at dusk ... I find that on the ground the situation is sufficiently quiet. Resuming contact with the Navy Lieutenant Levy, who asks for the execution of an immediate landing of material and personnel at Mistery Beach. At 19:00 I embark on the Ms 74 ... I place all the load on the Ms 74. I order the Ms 65 to watch the sea during the landing.

"Mistery Beach operations are completed quickly. From the ground we are asked for our return between 24:00 and 01:00 for the re-embarkation of a part of the personnel. As Ms 65's commander tells me that during the last stage of disembarkation I have seen a ship suspected of the well-known silhouette of a German MTB coming to Sugar Beach, I decide to carry out an offensive search with the two ships.

"The search lasts from 23:30 of the 27<sup>th</sup> to 00:50 of the 28<sup>th</sup> with negative results".

Returning to Mistery Beach and not having the personnel to take aboard (who had moved to Sugar Beach on the ground in the meantime), Commander Fusco - unable to stay in that "beach" because it was in sight of Santa Caterina battery – At Sunrise with the ships at Sugar Beach.

After six days of continuous movements with the tedious unloading and cargo operations, the Ms crews needed some rest, and Commander Fusco set off at 03:00 on the 28<sup>th</sup> that in 24 hours the motosiluranti go to rest at Porto Palermo, beginning with Ms 65, who during the trip had to unload at Nan Beach two tons of ammunition and materials.

"[Just started] the Ms 65 is now perfectly framed by the Santa Caterina battery. I watch the shot of 4 salvos

always very together. The unit maneuvers brilliantly and succeeds in disorienting the lead of the shot that stops after 15 minutes (count 19 salvos) ...

"Through the Lieutenant Levy I was asked to run a series of material landings at Mistery Beach from 20:00 onwards. The cargo begins at 18:45 pm on the Ms 74. At 18:50, the 88 mortar open fire on the bay and the beach. The operations continue on a regular basis. At 19:00, Ms 65 leaves Port Palermo, whose commander tells me that he has the left engine in failure ... Since his ship is not fully efficient, she is not suitable for use in a similar operating area. I order him to return immediately to Brindisi (19:30 of the 28<sup>th</sup>).

"With Ms 74 I depart from Sugar Beach at 21:15 after the last cargo. The disembarkation and return are on a regular basis.

"The weather conditions are bad. Rain squalls and winds make the maneuvers difficult and dangerous. The second cargo starts at 01:00 and goes on slowly until 04:00. I do not consider it appropriate to carry out the second expedition, since the blinding rain has no visibility, and the security of the Mistery Beach maneuver is very dubious: I can not risk being stranded less than 11,000 feet from Santa Caterina's battery in full sunny daylight. With full understanding of these considerations, Lieutenant Levy RN tells me the ground that action must be postponed. Returning aboard at 05:00 reports to me, the Command of the Landing Force considers it of the utmost importance and absolute necessity that I try to do landing at Mistery Beach anyway to have at least two other guns at that garrison.

"Taking advantage of a rainfall I'll be out of Sugar Beach at 05:15. I arrive at 05:25 to Mistery Beach, where with the fastest operations of my entire crew I land at 07:15 ... I wait for another rainfall to return to Sugar Beach".

The Lieutenant Levy, made another contact with the Command of the Landing Force, announces that the motor torpedo boat can return to Brindisi, and he has the praise of Gen. Churchill for the work carried out by the crew of Ms 74 deployed to the stern.

"At 12:10, the enemy 88 battery reopens fire on the bay and ends at 12:40. At 12:48, after embarking on British officers and soldiers, I leave Sugar Beach. Just outside, Santa Caterina's battery opens a slightly long shot on the ship, which corrects quickly to straddle. I throw into the sea a

smoke buoy and I stick with the bow on the battery, bringing the ship out of the fourth salvo that would been centered,

"Afterwards-I'll resume the planned route by decreasing speed. All the shot - over 12 salvos - comes from that moment brought on the smoke buoy.

"At 17:05 of September 29, Ms 74 is moored in Otranto."

*18 - Combat of Ms 56 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Leonardo Zanoni) and death of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Vincenzo Fusco.*

On November 12, 1944, the section of Ms 56 and 35 departed from Brindisi to intercept possible enemy traffic between the mouths of Kotor and Dulcigno to test the coastal defenses of the same area with particular regard to the bay of Antivari and to machine gun land traffic along the coast.

On Ms 56 were cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Fusco, commander of the expedition, and the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Levy.

According to information on defensive preparations and enemy activities, the mission was very risky: for this reason Commander Fusco wanted to take over the leadership.

The section of the motor torpedo boats took the sea at 14:20: after about four hours the Ms 35 had a defect to the central engine: Commander Fusco sent her back to the base and decided to continue with one ship towards Antivari.

At 21:00, Ms 56 entered the bay of Antivari, stopping at 22:00 short distance from the pier of the port of that town. He was fortunate not to be noticed by the observation station, which was equipped with a radar and a searchlight. At 22:10, after about 20 minutes of observation of the traffic on the coastal roadway, Ms 56 moved away to search for possible maritime traffic.

But at 23:20, at the request of Lieutenant Levy, Ms. 56 came back to the pier.

At 00:25 on November 13, a ship was suddenly spotted, which, from a distance of about 500 meters, tried, rounding the tip of the bay, to cut off the exit route to Ms 56. While in an unfavorable position, Commander Fusco decided to immediately engage in combat.

The two ships were on opposite routes at a very short distance from each other: Ms 56 opened the fire first. The enemy ship, which was widely recognized for a German minesweeper heavily

armed, reacted with intense fire of automatic weapons, striking the motor torpedo boat several times.

Cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Fusco fell lifeless, struck by a burst of projectiles; Were seriously injured Lieutenant Levy and a machine gun pointer (the torpedo man Borsani). The motor torpedo boat, fortunately not damaged in vital parts, continued to shoot and managed to escape the persistent opposing fire and to move away with a daring maneuver, returning to Brindisi at 06:45 of the 13<sup>th</sup>.

To the commander Fusco, already many times decorated, was awarded the gold medal for the military valor for the daring demonstrated during the action that took place during a mission to which he had participated without the obligation.

*19 - Support activities for N.P. operators or assault means from mid 1944 until the end of the conflict.*

In paragraph 13 it was recalled, by way of example, the intense activity carried out by Ms 74 in the second half of May 1944 to allow coastal surveys with M.T.S.M. and land informants.

Already between April 25 and April 30, 1944, the DD *Grecale* (cap. freg. [Commander] Benedetto Ponza di San Martino) had three missions with three M.T.S.M. on board, to simulate and make surveys on the beaches of three small bays on the Montenegrin coast between Dukigno and Antivari. Due to adverse weather conditions, the operation succeeded the third time in the night between 29 and 30 April, but it was still obstructed by rainfall, which made the visibility very variable with the risk of not tracing the M.T.S.M. to proceed with their recovery.

And on May 11 - 12, two M.T.S.M. (244 with ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Edoardo Longobardi and with the 2nd Chief Marron, the 218 with gmr. [Midshipman] Coda and Deputy Chief Gattorno), escorted and not carried by Ms 54 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Ivonetti) had crossed the two Otranto - Albanian coast strait landing British informants and recovering a sick English officer, a captain and five Italian soldiers, who had lived for eight months in the forests of the mountains and who for some twenty days had relied on an English detachment that operated underground.

Among the numerous operations of the N.P. departmental units of the San Marco regiment - including some unsuccessful attempts or for prohibitive sea conditions or because of the impossibility of landing thereafter



when active enemy vigilance is observed - just remember the following:

- 19 – 20 June 1944: 10 Operators embarked from Termoli on Ms 31 escorted by Ms 64 with the task of destroying a stretch of railway line north of Ortona. Once the motor torpedo boat arrived in the area, the operators had to change three times the landing point for the presence of German soldiers; The third time it was decided, to give less to the eye and speed up the action, to send only three operators to the ground. These, evading the vigilance around a loaded train, managed to blow up some cars and damage the track below, returning to Ms 31. The positive results obtained were found by aerial recon. Commander of the N.P. unit was sottotenente [Ensign] Achille Amorosi.

- 20 – 21 July 1944: 12 operators departed from Ortona on Ms 61 escorted by Ms 73 with the task of destroying a bridge north of Ortona on highway n. 16 (the Adriatic Coast). Discharged, due to an error of estimation of the motor torpedo boat two kilometers further north of the established point, sottotenente [Ensign] Angelo Garrone, head of the expedition, decided to interrupt the roadway; On the way back to the beach was cut a telephone line. At 02:35 on July 21<sup>st</sup>, while the operators were embarking on the boats to return on board, they heard the very loud explosion of the mines and saw the intense light of incendiary bombs they placed to illuminate the interrupted road section and serve the as a guide to R.A.F. aircraft who had to - as agreed - attack the vehicles on the spot due to the road break.

- 22 - 23 July 1944: 15 operators departed from Ancona under the command of the sottotenente [Ensign] Ambrose, on Ms 31 escorted by Ms 64, with the task of destroying another bridge on highway n. 16 to the north of Ancona, a bridge parallel to highway n. 16 and a railway bridge. On arrival, due to the poor condition of the sea, two operators were grounded to make sure it was right near the bridges. They came back, reporting that the surf and the breakers did not allow the landing and that the point was not the correct one. One of the operators (sailor Giacomo Baratti) had even been swept by the waves near the rocks and had managed to return by swimming to the Ms 31. After a failed attempt to land a little further north they had to give up accomplishing the action.

- 25 - 26 July 1944: 7 operators departed from Ancona, under the command of the sottotenente [Ensign] Antonio Di Clemente, On Ms 61 escorted

by the Ms 73, to destroy a railway bridge; Two informants should also land. The operation succeeded partially with the landing of the latter, while gunshots with flare ignition and searchlights forced them to forgo the main operation. Even the Ms were under fire as they moved away after I got on board the men.

- August 1944: from this month onwards the men of the N.P. department operated on Ancona or Senigallia, having been transferred to Falconara Marittima on July 30.

On the night from 16 to 17 the N.P. sappers sailed to Ancona, in the number of 12 with the sottoten. [Ensign] Ambrose on Ms 56 escorted by Ms 64 to blow up a road bridge south of Pesaro. Two recruiting men were first posted on the ground, one of whom returned on board reporting that he had identified the bridge. Then the expedition landed at the finish line and managed to mine it, despite the presence of enemy patrols. The bridge exploded as the sappers came on board.

Five days later (August 21st - 22nd), two Ms and the same number of operators, two unsuccessful attempts to destroy two bridges, was interrupted a road and destroyed some pylons of a high voltage electric line. The operation was resumed the following night, again unsuccessfully because the two pre-operations reconnaissance operators were discovered and shot at. Fortunately they were able, with skillful courage, to return unharmed on board.

An information mission was carried out between the night 23 and 24 and the night 28 - 29 August by the sottoten. [Ensign] Enzo Mini, along with sailors Giovanni Scagliola and Luigi Campora, accompanied by the partisan Luigi Rolando. They landed in a civilian dress from Ms 56 escorted by Ms 64 in Casteldimezzo, behind the Gothic line, in 5 days of risky activity in an area called by the Germans, "the area of death" managed to collect all the estimated news of the military situation - political - civil, and the Gothic line for the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army, by contacting the partisan brigades "Garibaldi" and "Pesaro". Sottoten. [Ensign] Mini and the sailor Scagliola returned to the General Headquarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, using an inflatable boat that they had hidden, landing, in a wilderness of the coast, in order to give information they knew was urgent. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, with the same motor torpedo boat, came back

on the landing point to collect the sailor Campora, which was recovered and brought further information.

- September 1944: On the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ms 73 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Egidio Carlini) escorted by Ms 64 landed on the coast of Romagna a number of Canadian soldiers who landed with the help of three N.P. under the command of sottoten. [Ensign] Ambrose, after they explored the area to make sure the Canadians would not be surprised by enemy elements.

Five days earlier, on the night of the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ms 56 escorted by Ms 64 had landed near the same area the sottoten. [Ensign] Angelo Garrone with sub-chief radioman Giuseppe Montanino and soldier Antonio Maletto, charged with collecting and transmitting information. These valiant men remained in the rear of the enemy until October 12, when - after three attempts to contact them by means of expeditions of other men - the officer and the soldier were recovered, while the radioman continued to stay in the area to broadcast news as he had done until then, during the 25-day stay, the N.P. patrol had frequent clashes with enemy elements, followed by quick moves to avoid capture.

- October 1944: Four missions were executed, of which only the first one could be successfully executed; the others were interrupted for bad sea conditions.

During the first, on the night of October 18, they landed Antonio Maletto together with material and weapons for a gang of partisans with whom he was connected through the sub-chief radioman Giuseppe Montanino. In the other missions British and Italian informants should have been landed.

- November 1944: Of the eight missions carried out between 9 and 24 November - all times in order to bring supplies to patriots and to Montanino and Maletto, or to land informative operators, of which only the last one succeeded because the others had been frustrated by sea conditions or lack of appointment with partisan personnel who should have been on the beaches - we will remember the first and the sixth.

The first one, with Mas 514 (gmr. [Midshipman] Pier Luigi Antonini) and 547 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Alberto Scaroni), was characterized by sea conditions so bad that it would jeopardize the same safety of the Mas. Towards 20:00 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mas 514 had to return to Ancona for failure to a motor, while the wave motion was increasing; The Mas 547, arrived at the landing point and waited for about half an hour for a confirmed signal, then took the return route

while "the sea grew in intensity for the strong wind of sunset, several times jeopardized the lives of all the men; The pneumatic battles, despite being bonded solidly to the Mas deck, were ripped and thrown at sea from Giant waves ... After tragic hours of continuous struggle against the elements, it was possible to reach the port of Ancona on at 07:00 of November 10<sup>th</sup>".

For the sixth mission (night on 18 November), American P.T. (Patrol Torpedoboat) *Rebel*, who came out of Ancona at 17:10 of the 17<sup>th</sup>, aboard the Lieutenant (Jg) Garrone with six N.P. who had to land and materials for patriots; Montanino and Maletto were also to be recovered, who for two months had been in enemy occupied territory for two months and remained there until the liberation of Ravenna (5 December 1944), to which they contributed effectively (1).

The P.T. in the area, found herself in the middle of a fog bank that reduced the visibility to about 250 meters, but protected him from the sight of enemy boats that he heard the noise of the engines. Despite the apparent risk, he was decided to send two soldiers in reconnaissance on the nearby coast, which was perceived through the fog: offered to volunteer were medic sub-chief Ciro Perreca

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(1) Montanino and Maletto showed great ability and courage, keeping in touch with the patriots, sending news to the Command of the 8<sup>th</sup> British Army, and orders to the Partisan Brigades to coordinate their action with that of the Army that he reached Ravenna December 5th. In fact, on November 16<sup>th</sup>, with a boat crewed by patriots, Maletto had landed at Cervia (which had been liberated at the end of October) to give far more information than those transmitted so far by radiotelegraphy and to take new instructions. Returning the 20<sup>th</sup> to the area, with two allied informants among them, Canadian Captain Healy, carrying a load of war material for the patriots, landed at a point where Montanino was waiting for him with a group of patriots.

When the Canadian Division operating near the front of Ravenna began the attack that led to the liberation of the city, the patriots could perform coordinated and concomitant action thanks to the intense work done by our two intrepid NP operators, who also performed with great success the mining of the streets that the Germans could use during the battle.

"During our stay in enemy territory - concluded Montanino and Maletto in their report - we were sent 339 radio messages to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Command, and we also recovered three members of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), three allied aviators of a plane crashed and two allied soldiers escaped from a concentration camp."

and the soldier Angelo De Polo. In the face of their delay in returning to the P.T., Lieutenant (j.g) Garrone decided to go searching with three of his N.P. sailors.

In short, given the fog of the mist, the two groups - the sought after and the seeker - could not see each other or trace the P.T. and they had similar vicissitudes landing both, by chance, in Cervia after more than 20 miles of navigation performed on boats, of which the second pushed by the hands used as paddles tongue.

We leave a few sentences of Lieutenant (j.g) Garrone's report (with sailors Luigi Campora, Guglielmo Fiorentino, Armando Riccio) and sub-chief Perreca.

"Navigating by the stars we landed at 01:15," wrote Garrone, "we found neither men nor their means. The fog concealed us from the sight of the Germans we heard about the coast. With our boat we headed for the P.T., having given up on continuing the search. After a hundred meters the fog also covered the stars, thus depriving us of any orientation." When Garrone thought he was close to P.T. He began to make bright signals and then to call aloud. German voices answered him, and soon after, flashlights and floodlighted lights were turned on. "Being aware that we had been discovered and knew the area well, I tried to return to the ground; But lights and voices on the beach made me desist from trying ... moving away in the direction. Opposed to the noise of German boats searching for us in the fog. At 03:30 the fog began to dwindle, the stars reappeared and we made way back to the friendly coasts. Completely wet and winning the hardness of the nocturnal cold before, and tides the wind back after, raiding for 13 consecutive hours and covering a course of about 40 kilometers ... at 14:30 of the 18<sup>th</sup> it came to the coast at Cervia ...".

Perreca wrote that on the beach shortly after 24.00 of the 17<sup>th</sup>, with a battery powered electric boat, they heard - in the dense fog - German voices. Not being able to explore for lack of visibility they decided to return to the P.T.

They also got into, without being discovered, the boats alarmed by the boat of Lieutenant (j.g) Garrone. As the batteries were depleted, they lightened the platform by throwing off batteries and engines. Not having oars, they paddled by

hands and reached Cervia at 17:00 on the same day of the 18<sup>th</sup>, wet and numb.

"At the rising of the sun," Perreca wrote, "we were able to spot the coast..." In the pockets of the raincoat we found a chewing gum. Only food we had! Because of the soaked clothing, we trembled continually. The prolonged contact with the cold water had our hands swollen giving signs of freezing ... in the cold was added the torment of thirst, increased by the continuous splashes of salt water that struck our face and the sight of the infinite the water stretching around us ... At 17:00 we landed and came to meet the Canadians ...".

- December 1944: Two missions were carried out.

The first between 4 and 5 December with P.T. *Rebel*, also with the aim of replenishing our patriots and exemplary informants Moritanino and Maletto: this time at the head of 12 Italians N.P. was petty officer 3rd class Vittorio Fanchin under the orders of US officer Crislow.

The conditions of the mission now described, because of the fog, the American officer, who went to the ground, despite the contrary opinion of Marshal [Sergeant] Fanchin, with the sub-chief Perreca - "recidivist" in offering volunteer in the presence of the risk - he could not conclude anything nor trace the P.T. in an attempt to return aboard.

Crislow and Perreca returned to Cervia at 09:45 on December 5<sup>th</sup> with the boat, alternating in rowing, after exhausting the battery's electrical energy.

The second mission, carried out with P.T. *Rebel* in the night between 16 and 17, was successful.

This time, a group of four Italian informants disembarked on the coast Emilian with American Captain MacArthur landed in the north of Ravenna. The Italian informants (chief Fanchin, Sergeant radioman of the Navy Filippo Squeo, sub-chief Perreca, engineer Giovanni Coslovi) stayed in the area one day and then Cesenatico at 17:00 of the 19<sup>th</sup>, after 47 hours of sailing and rowing with paddles. Cesenatico had been liberated on 21 October.

On the other hand, Captain MacArthur, accompanied by chief 2nd Aligi Bertelloni, whom he had asked to accompany him (while he was among the personnel to secure the landing with a brief reconnaissance around the point of landing), returned to Ravenna harbor at 17:00 on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The shortness of stay in the area, well-used

to get information, was due to the concern not to fall into the hands of the Germans who - as the informants learned after they landed - had arranged a great deal to capture them, having been informed of their presence.

- Year 1945: Between January 1945 and the end of March 1945, N.P., often in conjunction with allied personnel, 19 missions for collecting, transmitting news, and supplying weapons and means to the partisan brigades. The landing points were all selected in the Valleys of Comacchio and the Po Delta, where - once the boats entered the canals - there were no worries or obstacles due to the state of the sea. The naval vessels used in these missions were, from time to time, civilian motor boats, motor torpedo boats or Mas, depending on the amount of men and materials to be carried. Ms 55 (Ercolessi) and 65 (Pinotti), Mas 514 (Antonini) and the P.T. *Rebel* were used.

The operators were the ones already mentioned, all in dependence on the sottoten. [Ensign] Ambrose, who was the most senior of our young N.P. officers, and who acted on Captain Kelly's orders, to which we added other names that we mention because their names are still handed to history (in the succession when they were sent for the first time into the enemy's rear): sailor Giuseppe Pecoraro, sergeant radioman of the Navy Intelligence Service Romeo Bertelli, sailor Maffeo Iacone, sailor Rocco Battista, sailor Athos Francesconi, sailor Cesare Palmari, Sailor Severino Rolando, Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> Riccardo Adroit, Sailor Domenico Messina, Chief Enrico Aldi, Soldier Alberto Antonini, First Sailor Olivo, sailor Mario Lucchetti.

The last four listed, together with the sottoten. [Ensign] Garrone and Corporal De Polo, carried out six risky exploratory and informative missions in the area extending between the Rhine [Reno] river and the Valleys of Comacchio between 3 and 23 March 1945

#### 46<sup>th</sup> THE N.P. UNITS IN THE VENICE LIBERATION OPERATIONS (APRIL 30, 1945) (Graph 10).

From April 20, 1945, N.P. units, both alone and allied with small allied units, in the advanced position of the extreme right wing of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, led a series of heinous operations, capturing numerous prisoners and various war material,

landing in Venice on the morning of April 30, the first and only contingent of Italian combat troops to enter the city, as already mentioned.

The detailed story of the daring of which the brave N.P. tried to test this resolution phase of the war would require a whole volume: in the general economy of this book it is necessary to limit itself to a summary of the main phases of the epic gesture.

Following the order to prepare the advance, issued by the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters, on April 19. Ambrosi received a request from ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Kelly to study a plan of offensive operations, disembarking items from the units behind enemy lines, attacking them, with surprise assault to be carried out in co-operation with allied troops and bands of patriots.

The operations planned for the N.P. units were as a whole the following:

- occupation of the Donzella island at the mouth of the Po of Tolle with landing at night, in order to obstruct a limited area;
- organization, armament and education of all the patriots who would flow to the field, of which the unit would assume direction and command;
- further occupation, at the time ordered, of targets assigned and advanced on other goals further north, depending on the success of the first operations.

The actions would be carried out in conjunction with the British sappers (P.P.A. unit) commanded by Major Canary, who had explicitly requested it to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Command and with which future operational plans would be studied, depending on the circumstances and the consequent needs .

The offensive was started on 22 April by the patriots of Sacca di Scardovaro and those operating up to the Po of Venice, led by N.P. elements. To get the news, ten. [Lieutenant] Ambrosi went with the ten. [Naval Lieutenant] Kelly into the combat zone to get in touch with his more advanced men and recon enemy positions. Returning to the base of Porto Corsini, he mobilized the complete unit, preparing for the imminent entry into action.

Before the dawn of April 26, two teams and a group of explorers - informers - under the direct command of the Lieutenant Ambrose - embarked on British assault boats and landed on the Po of Gnocca in the Scoretta area, while the British sappers stopped



more downstream, to Santa Giulia, so you can get capture the Germans in the middle if they have attempted an offensive return. From Scoretta part of the landed continued with 4 machine-guns for -Porto Tolle, occupying Ca' Tiepolo, which shortly afterwards was also reached by the P.P.A. The area was settled in defense with the partisans. They were caught on the same evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> in Porto Corsini, with English means, a hundred German prisoners.

The whole area had been and still was the scene of fighting between Nazi-fascist troops and groups of patriots organized and commanded by the valiant Sergeant Fanchin and an officer of an O.S.S. unit who had long been behind enemy lines.

Given the confused news about the ongoing actions, it was decided by the N.P. Unit Command in agreement with Major Canary and with the American liaison officer to send patrols in reconnaissance to the west, northeast and beyond the Po in the direction of Contarina.

For that last patrol, Lieutenant Ambrose wanted to take command of the same, who accompanied an American officer - after crossing the Po - Contarina. Approximately one kilometer from this location the patrol was welcomed by an intense barrier fire, so - abandoned the vehicle too visible - he went on foot, reaching Contarina at 16:00 on the 26<sup>th</sup>: hence, after giving directions for the attack on the positions of cannons, of mortars and of machine-guns pulling on the village, the patrol came back to the base.

The breadth of the operational sector would have required forces far beyond the units of the N.P. and that English P.P.A., but since their entry into operation, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army's Headquarters had warned that the two units would have to rely solely on their forces and those of the partisan groups acting on orders from the N.P. unit and that they also had the task of maintaining links with the "Garibaldi" brigade, and the "Cremona" Combat Group operating in the area.

On the morning of April 27<sup>th</sup>, news that the Germans had begun retreat to Adige and Brenta, he was determined to pursue them, pushing on to Chioggia on two different lines of attack.

First task of the N.P. unit was the clearance of the Po of mines and net barriers, placed by the Germans towards the mouth, to allow the British landing craft to transport the P.P.A. and tanks, and Italian means, to cross the river and start marching north.

At 10:00 of April, 27, across the Po, the British units went on to Loreo, while the N.P. group, accompanied by a group of patriots commanded by the lieutenant physician Francesconi, headed for Porto Levante where he arrived at 13:00.

Porto Levante was reached by another N.P. group who, after very tiring navigation on ordinary fishing boats, landing arms and ammunition for the patriots, and then continued in stormy weather, arriving in Chioggia on April 29, in time to participate in the operations of the unit.

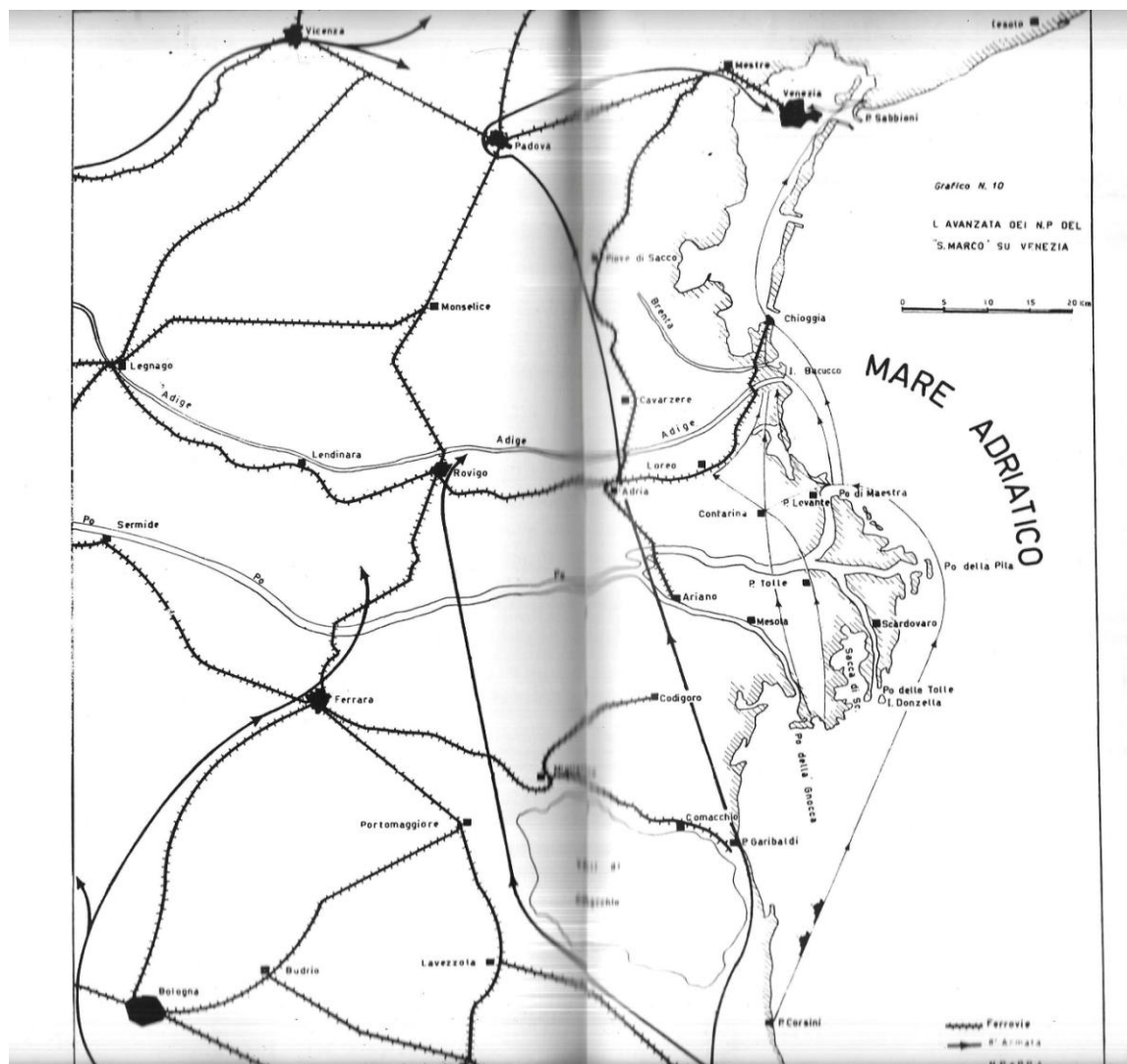
From Porto Levante, informed by the patriots that the enemy was retreating to Adige and Brenta, the commander of the unit sent on the same day of the 27<sup>th</sup> a group of explorers with some patriots knowledgeable of the places, with the task of circumventing enemy lines by sea and to gather information, giving them an appointment on the right bank of Brenta, in Calisso.

Explorers, at the command of Leut. Garrone, landed in Bacucco Island and began marching towards the mouth of Brenta, arriving at 17:00. Spotted by the Germans at one kilometer from the river were greeted by gun and rifle fire. After a few minutes of lively fire on both sides, the Germans, who had suffered losses, they tried to save themselves by escape, but 14 were taken prisoners.

Leaving two men to watch the prisoners, the Leut. Garrone pursued the fugitives and, after a new, lively fight with other losses on the part of Germany, captured the remaining 13 men and two motorboats on which they had attempted to flee, loaded with automatic weapons, an anti-tank gun, Tons of food and ammunition and 5 horses.

The action had raised the enemy's attention to the right bank of the Brenta; Leut. Garrone, watched an intense movement of enemy troops, was able to stand in a well-protected defense position and send a messenger to the commander of the N.P. unit to warn him and to guide him, where appropriate, to the place. The messenger arrived at midnight (on the 27<sup>th</sup>), and immediately the commander of the unit with the team he had with him set off; After a tiring march of 30 kilometers, carrying heavy and light automatic weapons with its ammunition, joined the Garrone group, which shortly afterwards was also strengthened by the patriotic unit at the command of the lieutenant physician Francesconi.

### Chart 10



On the morning of 28 April - very early - they came to an advanced N.P. post some individuals in civilian clothes (then recognized for Ukrainian soldiers in the service of the Germans, sent to bring back information), who said that troops of the garrison of Brondolo - Sant'Elena - Chioggia asked to negotiate the surrender, as long as they were sure to surrender to regular troops and not patriots. They replied that the yield would only be discussed with a duly authorized German officers. It was also said to them that the advanced post was held by patrols of an armored division already in place and that other divisions were camped 5 kilometers further south, ready to enter into action. The Ukrainian informers remained convinced that they had seen and contacted large allied forces.

Shortly there came a German officer, who was received and listened to by Lieutenant Hearn, a liaison officer with us from the US. The German officer reported that he was ready to lead our parliamentarians to the commander of the Chioggia area. It was agreed that while Leut. Hearne, Leut. Garrone would go to Chioggia, Leut. Ambrose and his men would stand in defense under the fort of Brondolo. It was also agreed that there would be a truce until the conclusion of the negotiations.

The only condition placed by the commander of the Chioggia area, who was a former Russian prince, was that he and all Russian soldiers were not delivered to Russian troops. Accepting this condition by our parliamentarians, it was immediately ordered by the German commander (or Russian collaborator) to lay down the arms at the garrisons of Brondolo fortress, and those of Sant'Elena and Chioggia.

So at 08:00 in the morning of April 28, the N.P. unit of the "San Marco", represented by the men of the team of the Leut. Amorosi, by the explorers group of Leut. Garrone, by Leut. Bona of another unit, having with them the American lieutenant Hearn and the Italian-American corporal Rago (both of the O.S.S.) came to Chioggia, greeted by the triumphal acclamations of the population as hundreds of German soldiers greeted with few words.

The yield of the garrisons of Chioggia, Brondolo and Sant'Elena, by a very small number of N.P., produced a big booty of war material and more than a thousand prisoners.

By 11:00 on the same day, they came to see the fort of Brondolo, the British sappers of the Major Canary, to which the Leut. Garrone - previously sent to meet them - had given the announcement

the result of the strong position of the enemy to our unit and the two Americans of the O.S.S..

Shortly afterwards, they came to Chioggia, the other forces of the N.P. unit, who had remained in the rear positions assigned to them, and the American Naval Lieutenant Kelly, commander of the O.S.S., to whose dependence the N.P. unit operated.

On the evening of April 28, from the General Headquarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, the Order reached the N.P. and P.P.A. units to move to Venice. Major Canary obtained that the N.P. unit acted in a combined action with his sappers.

On the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>, finished the preparations, at 11:30 a group of N.P. men under the command of ten. [Lieutenant] Mini boarded on a motorized bragozza\* captured from the Germans and departed from Chioggia to Venice, followed in the lagoon canals by the British landing boats. The group included 4 officers and 24 military personnel, plus 2 civilians who voluntarily and courageously followed the operations as unit cooks.

The place agreed for the disembarkation of Italian and English groups was Punta Sabbioni, where they arrived at 15:00. The Germans were stopped at a short distance. Since, as reported by some patriots, the strong enemy troops of about 2000 men were about to return to the batteries of Punta Sabbioni, who had previously been abandoned and ordered the N.P. to stop with the support of some tanks of the P.P.A. in an appropriate position to face them, and to withstand, if attacked, until the reinforcements arrived. The assigned position was occupied under a torrential rain.

Towards 20:00 on the same evening German officers came to Major Canary and to Naval Lieutenant Kelly to treat for the surrender of their men; the yield was accepted and the Germans laid down their weapons.

The British P.P.A. and Italian N.P., the following morning, April 30, were withdrawn from the positions of Punta Sabbioni and started to Venice, where they landed the same day.

With this concluding event, every need for co-operation by the N.P. unit with the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army, the unit returned to the ranks of the Navy to which it belonged on May 15 (as mentioned in paragraph 39), on which occasion Colonel J.F. Glavin, Commander of the 2677<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment USA, the O.S.S. with which the unit had worked for 16 months, addressed to the Minister de Courten a message containing among other things the following sentences:

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\*typical shallow bottomed boat used in lagoons for fishing.

"During the 16 months of service provided to this Command, the men of the N.P. unit "San Marco" has accomplished many missions of importance with great success. Their work, under the Naval Lieutenant Kelly and under the top leadership of the XV Army Group, made a real contribution to the liberation of Italy and the crushing of Nazi forces. In informing you of the end of our collaboration with the San Marco unit, I would like to express my sincere thanks for the wonderful services it has made to our organization and the allied cause.

Colonel Glavin's message was brought to the Minister of the Navy by Naval Lieutenant Kelly, who - having personally directed and followed the unit in his business for 16 months - was more than any other able to appreciate the high military qualities, the abnegation and the spirit of initiative.

#### 47<sup>th</sup> SPECIAL MISSIONS OF THE TORPEDOS.

As mentioned in paragraph 44, the destroyers carried out 17 special missions and the torpedo boats 28: alone or in support of the motor torpedo boats or Mas. Two completed by the Cov. *Ape* in 1945: as far as this type of ship is not classified among the torpedoes, we include this in the paragraph, by analogy.

Paragraphs 8, 8a and 13 of paragraph 45 cited the participation in three special operations carried out by the motor torpedo boats, by the *Ardimentoso*, by the *Indomito* and by the *Grecale*. Below we will describe some of the most significant, accomplished by the torpedoes.

#### *I - The Grecale in action on Montenegrin coasts (cap. freg. [Commander] Benedetto Ponza di San Martino).*

This destroyer executed a mission on the coast between Dulcigno and Antivari in three subsequent attempts - already mentioned in no. 19 of paragraph 45 - taking on board the three M.T.S.M. n.250 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Corrado Dequal, sergeant Cerolini), 256 (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Lucius Cugia, Chief 33<sup>rd</sup> class Zoppis), 220 (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Mameli Rattazzi, Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> class Castelli), between 25 and 30 April 1944- On the 250, they also sailed on the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Gino Birindelli, head of the expedition of the M.T.S.M., American officers Johnson and Evans and two American sailors.

This triple mission, which, for the sake of topography, has been briefly mentioned, deserves to be described with the same words by the commander of *Grecale*, who left Taranto at 14:15 on 25 April.

"I arrive at 23:30 of the 25<sup>th</sup> on the point verbally indicating 2 miles to 250° from Punta Menders (Montenegro). Recognition of the position has been somewhat difficult due to the overcast sky and the dark night, which, on the other hand, has favored the conduct of the operation ... Estimating to be at the exact point, stop the engines and put to the sea the three MTSMs at 23:45; The sea is calm and facilitates the operations of landing ... The phosphorescence is very strong, the wake of the M.T.S.M. are visible at considerable distance and I fear they can be discovered from the ground ... There are frequent automotive headlights on the coast, which indicate a rather significant traffic on a coastal road ... At 02:44 the special means are embarked,... and start at 03:20 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, heading towards Brindisi. Operators of the M.T.S.M. tell me they have not been able to complete the mission, because - starting from a location likely north of the established one - they are found on a stretch of coastline more north to the one assigned. At 07:40 of the 26<sup>th</sup> I drop anchor in the roadstead of Brindisi.

"Despite the wind and sea conditions [which in the meantime had been bad], I try to repeat the operation before the favorable moon period runs out. I leave from Brindisi the afternoon of the same 26<sup>th</sup>, at 16:20, and head for the point of the previous night. At 18:00 the sea conditions that have worsened in the meantime (there is wind force 5 and sea force 3 from northwest) force me to reverse the route and return to Brindisi ...

"On the 29th I received verbal order to repeat the action, despite the unfavorable moon conditions and the sea slightly moved. I landed for the same point, so that at 20:00 hrs of the 29<sup>th</sup> at 15 miles from it. At that time and in that position I perfectly recognize the coast ... and I head for Punta Menders by reducing speed so I can find myself inshore after dark...; The operations at sea start at 21.11 and at 21.20 of the M.T.S.M. depart from aboard ... Low phosphorous. To avoid being seen from the ground, given the unfavorable moon position setting at 01:15 of the 30<sup>th</sup>, pendulum at moderate speed perpendicular to the coast, making sure that I find myself every hour at the established point, as by agreements with the M.T.S. M. operators. At 00:50, received a micro - wave signal, head to

bring me back to the point. Meanwhile, the wind and the sea, coming from the north, are remarkably strengthened and a strong rainfall hinders the visibility, at 01:25 I make a conventional signal with the blue Donath ... I receive in reply the counter-signal. At 01:42, the first two M.T.S.M. handle them right to embark. Difficult operations for the sea and the wind, which makes the ship somewhat appalled. At 02:37 comes under the edge of the M.T.S.M. Commanded by ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Cugia. The boarding ... and at 06:50 at Brindisi,

"The operators of M.T.S.M. say that the action was happily completed".

"This operation had been called "Virginia" by the Allied Naval Authorities".

2 - *Granatiere* (cap. freg. [Commander] Carlo Felice Albini) and *Oriani* (cap. freg. [Commander] Gino Cianchi) in action against German MTBs. (Graph 11).

The combat that is about to be described is that remembered at the end of paragraph 44.

At 14:00 on 2 May 1944 the *Granatiere* - *Oriani* section, under the command of cap. freg. [Commander] Albini left the port of Manfredonia to carry out an enemy traffic interception operation in the Gulf of Drin (north coast of Albania) and then bombard the port of Antivari.

The section, which arrived at 21:45 six miles north of Cape Rodoni (southern extremity of the Drin Gulf), turned north-northwest parallel to the coast, starting at 20 knots the anti-trafficking sweep. There was calm wind and sea, good visibility with the moon in the first quarter.

At 22:44, when following the course of the coast the line destroyers had a route to the west-northwest, the *Oriani* saw for 30 degrees from the bow to starboard about 4000 meters four motor torpedo boats who, coming from Punta Menders, headed to attack the Section. The *Oriani* turned a little to the left to carry all the weapons in the field, and immediately opened the fire with tracers and shells, signaling the sighting to the section head.

At 22:46, the *Granatiere* saw the motor torpedo boats, turned southwest to avoid a probable torpedo, ordered to increase the speed at 28 knots, and at 22:48 he also opened fire on the motor torpedo boats.



The *Oriani*, imitating the maneuver of the section leader, turned practically time with the *Granatiere* so as to get almost in line in front of it. After finishing, he started shooting.

The enemy ships, after this maneuvering of the destroyers, came to their aft areas, and precisely 40° to 50° astern to the crossing of the *Granatiere* and little to reach out to the side of the *Oriani*. As soon as the action began, the motor torpedo boats split into two sections, the first with a turn about to the southwest and the second for the southeast, and began to lay a protective smoke curtain.

The shooting of the destroyers was directed on the pair of motor torpedo boats heading southwest, which was the most dangerous because it was aimed at cutting off the route to the destroyers.

After a few minutes from the first round, the *Granatiere*, imitated by the *Oriani*, moved to the left again for 200°: the motor torpedo boat group dropped decisively on the stern.

At 22:52 the *Granatiere* stops the fire. The *Oriani*, on the other hand, continued to shoot on the head of the smoke curtain, as long as the field of firearms allowed it. At the eighth salvo a strong explosion behind the curtain and made him appreciate having hit one of the motor torpedo boats. At 22:53 the *Oriani* turns southwest (about 150°) on its own initiative, pausing the shot against the first pair of motor torpedo boats and opening it on its left side at a distance of about 7,000 meters on the second pair, which continued to move to the southeast. The shot was ineffective and after some salvos it was suspended.

The motor torpedo boats reacted at intervals with gunfire bursts.

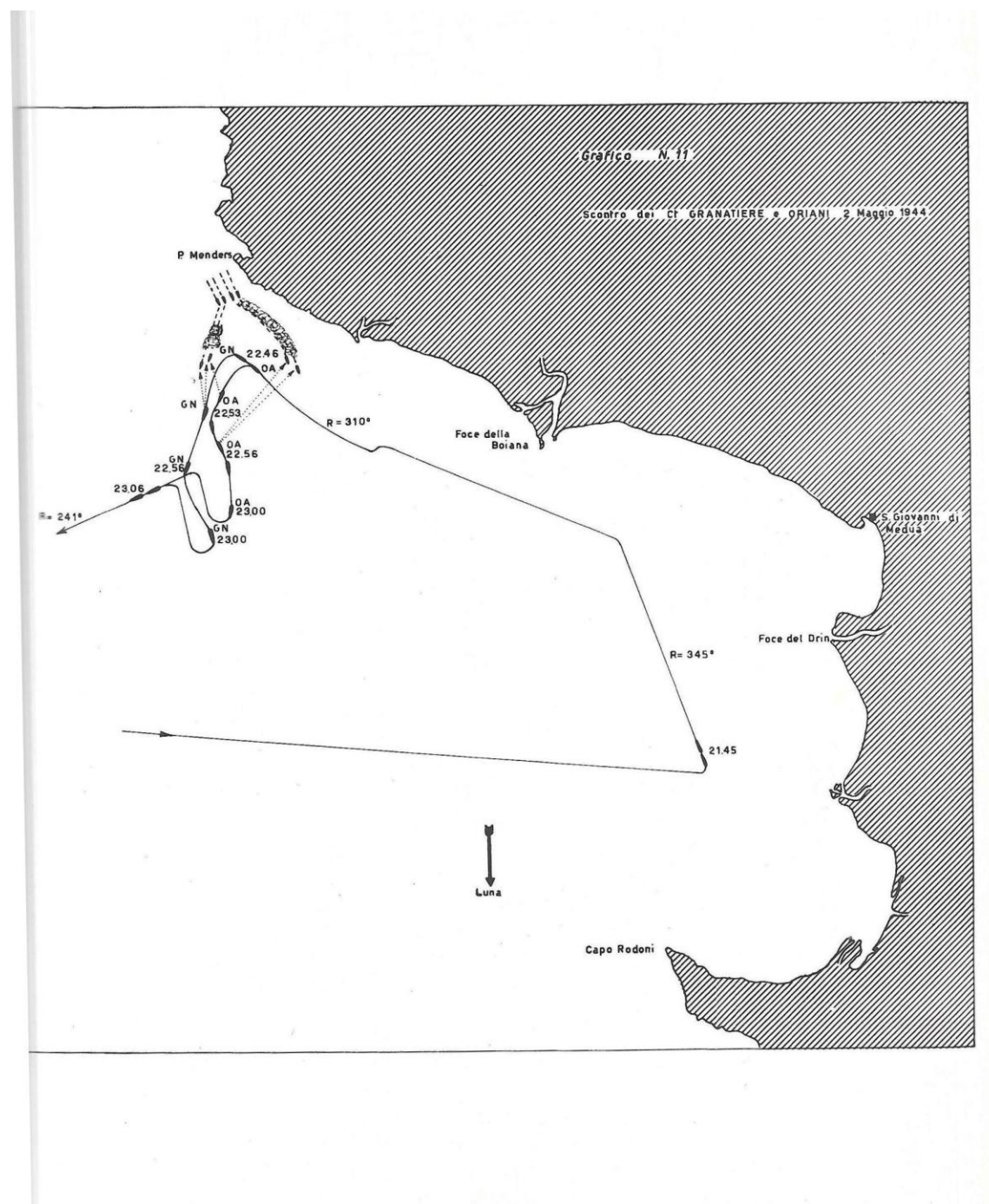
At 22:56 - after firing a few shells of machine guns in the aft areas - even the *Granatiere* finally ceased shooting and turns for about 150°, in order not to lose contact with the *Oriani* which, after the turn of the 22:53, was at about 2000 meters. At the same time (22:56), a small caliber battery had opened fire from Punta Menders, but the shots fell short.

At 23:00, on the order of the *Granatiere*, the two destroyers turn for 350° by reforming the line and at 23:06 turn for 241°, then turning for the return to the base.

The night before the two destroyers had done a similar mission. At the height of Punta Menders had been attacked by two MTBs, which - soon began the reaction of the destroyers

# The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

Chart 11



- they had reversed the route to the north by hiding with the artificial fog.

The destroyer section after chased away the enemy MTB had been able to continue to Antivari by carrying out the bombardment of the port and returning regularly to base.

So the next night, May 2, it was likely that the enemy would appear again, as it appeared, with doubled forces. It should be noted that, in view of this likelihood, the director of the shooting was on the *Oriani*, while on the *Granatiere* there was the normal sighting service: although the personnel involved in this service were particularly trained, it was only the *Oriani* to do the MTB first sighting, even though the ship in the queue of the section and was then the farthest from the enemy units.

### *3 - The two missions of the Artigliere (cap. freg. [Commander] Gastone Pardo).*

These two missions were not marked by episodes of encounter with the enemy, but represented a form of use of the destroyers that should be remembered.

On July 19, 1944, the destroyer left Taranto at 08:17, aboard an English officer with 5 soldiers, about 6 tons of material and 6 small rafts for landing. At 23:33 she reached the point on the west coast of Greece, landed the material and collected, boarding, 66 refugees of various nationalities. At 03:00 on July 20th she headed back to Taranto, where she arrived at 15:13.

On September 20, 1944, he performed a similar mission. Starting from Taranto at 4:30, loaded with weapons and materials destined for Greek patriots, he reached the point set at 20:00 in the Gulf of Arcadia (West Coast of Morea [Greece]), landed supplies for patriots and embarked on 27 refugees (19 Italians, 3 British, 3 non-Nazis Germans, 2 French). At 00:45 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, she could resume the way back, returning to Taranto at 13:45.

### *4 - Missions of the torpedo boats.*

No torpedo boat had clashes with enemy ships.

However, it is worth recalling the TB *Animoso* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pasquale Mallardi) who performed all 11 missions on the Greek and Albanian coasts between 13 September and 4 October 1944 together with Mz 758 [landing craft] (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Aldo Marinai): Since each mission involved daytime hours of two days with an night in between, for

the *Animoso* were 22 out of 22 the days spent in course of navigation, with a few hours of stop between one and the next mission in Brindisi's port to get ready.

The landing craft carried supplies to Greek patriots; when weather conditions allowed him to do the torpedo boat towing her crossings in order to proceed with speeds of 11 to 12 knots, higher than that allowed by the landing craft motors. Having come to the point of view, the torpedo boat left the tow and the landing craft; going up to the beach, quickly proceeding to unloading the material on board, generally picked up people for Italy (informers, refugees, and military personnel) and then started the return navigation.

Of the other 16 special missions carried out by the other torpedo boats on the same coast, all with the purpose of carrying supplies and retrieving personnel, it is enough to remember four of them, which offer some peculiarities of interest: three of the *Indomito* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Emanuele Filiberto Perucca ) and one of the *Ardimentoso* (cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Domenico Ravera),

The first of the *Indomito* was accomplished, starting from Taranto and returning to it, between 12:50 on February 3, 1944 and 08:40 on the following day of the 4<sup>th</sup>. Accompanying the torpedo boat were the Ms 54 (Ivonetti) and 55 (Ercolessi) and Mas 516 (Scaroni ) And 547 (Vanzetti). It has already been described in n. 8 bis of paragraph 45, but here we give the version according to the sober report of cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Perucca.

On the way out, Ms 54 twice had engine trouble and the torpedo boat moved to the vicinity, interrupting the march to the goal, to give it any help. However, the mission was carried out on a regular basis, landing materials and recovering 253 people.

Commander Perucca noted in his report on the mission: "The operation was carried out regularly according to forecasts, without contrast by the enemy, despite the reported presence in the immediate vicinity of German units charged to accurately sweep the area.

"It appears that the German Command is aware of the operations and has taken hostages in order to be informed promptly and react with aircraft from the Tirana airport.

"The sanitary conditions of the personnel transported require careful disinfection of the ship. As for the health conditions,

with the exception of 4 malarias and 5 wounded, the personnel recovered was not in bad shape."

On the second mission, the *Indomito* performed, from Taranto, between 06:45 and 15:45 of March 16, 1944, together with Vas 246 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Filippo Viola).

The double crossing was completed at 18 knots, the cruising speed of the Vas.

The torpedo boats master's report does not reveal the purpose of the mission, which is simply referred to as a "secretive mission". But since he had the English officer on board, he had to get in touch with informants and probably to land men and recover others.

The Vas, having completed the mission on the coast at 04:00 of the morning, warned the torpedo boat by radiotelephone to wait for her at the meeting point to begin the return trip. The meeting did not take place, and then the torpedo boat, not to be at dawn lights too close to the enemy coast, ordered Vas to set off 17 knots to the base of Taranto: the meeting took place at 05:40 when the torpedo boat was joined by the Vas.

Meanwhile, the Vas was shaken by the sea and entered Gallipoli, while the torpedo boat went on for Taranto.

The third of the missions mentioned here was performed by the *Indomito* with Mz 784 (sottoten. vasc. c. [Ensign] Luigi Sanna) from the base of Brindisi, between 15:24 of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19:28 of October 17, 1944.

The torpedo boat first headed for Monopoli, where the landing craft was waiting outside the harbor. Taking her in tow, heading for the area allocated to the coasts of Greece. The landing craft performed his mission between 06:30 and 08:30 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, that is, in full daylight, landing medicines and 70 tons of flour and embarking on 203 Italian and 6 English.

I picked up the tow on the landing craft, the crossing for the return journey began at 09:53.

Meanwhile, the force of the wind increased from wind force 7 and sea force 4, as the sea was in the stern, the tow could be maintained at 12.5 effective knots. The torpedo boat, received the order to go to Taranto, replied that [given the bad weather he would continue to Brindisi from which he had departed.

Here is the mission of the *Ardimentoso*, also accomplished by Mz 784.

The torpedo boat left Brindisi with the landing craft at 14:20 on June 12, 1944 and returned to Taranto with the landing craft at 17:35 on 13 June.

The designated point for the mission was just a few miles from Porto Palermo: the two ships arrived shortly after midnight and the landing craft at 01:40 was returning to the side of the torpedo ship waiting for it. He reported that he had landed only a quarter of the material, not having considered it safe to keep up for the sighting from the ground, at dusk, of four German MTB, presumably on a cruise watch; He had also recovered 56 Italians, 63 British, including 6 officers, 2 Americans of the Information Service, and an Albanian.

#### 48<sup>th</sup> SPECIAL MISSIONS OF THE SUBMARINES.

All submarines - used for various purposes in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic - were organically dependent on the Submarine Command (Maricosom), established in Taranto, as stated in paragraph 35, October 10, 1943 and Entrusted to cap. freg. [Commander] Chialamberto, who in his capacity as commander of the IV Submarine Group since May 30, 1943, became the most senior of the submarine officers present in the territory controlled by the legitimate government. Depending on him, even operative (always according to the orders of the Allied Authorities), the underwater boats used in the metropolitan waters.

For submarines, offering all the 19 special missions to which they give some interesting details, instead of describing them in chronological order, we will talk about them by uniting them in the chronological sequence in which each boat was first employed on a special mission, namely: *Manara*, *Marea*, *Nichelio*, *Axum*, *Platino*, *Diaspro*.

The missions were all for the primary purpose of disembarking or retrieving operators - informers.

##### *a) Sub Manara (ten. [Lieutenant] Gaspare Cavallina).*

The only mission of this submarine to be carried out from Brindisi at 17:50 on October 27, 1943 and returning to 06:38 on November 3, 1943 after 157 hours at sea, was intended to embark 3 groups of operators - informers at three points on the coast of the Upper Adriatic. He achieved the desired goals, but - the submarine having

suffered from numerous ailments due to its age (it had been in service since 1930), so much so that it had previously been assigned to the Submarine School and removed from the roster of operating boats - it was not used in other special missions. If she could carryout her only mission, this was due to the skill and abnegation of her staff.

*b) Sub Marea (sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Attilio Russo).*

Of the two missions made by this submarine, with modes and purposes similar to those of the sub *Manara*, we will describe the first because of this only the relation made by cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Raul Galletti, who took part in his role as head of information service in Brindisi (see paragraph 44-b). It was carried out in 134 hours from the base of Brindisi between 17:00 on 3 November and 06:45 on November 9, 1943. The second - perfectly analogous - was of 144 hours at sea between 08:00 on December 23 and 08:24 Of December 29, 1943.

Here is, in a large excerpt, the report of Commander Galletti. "... Smg Marea leaves the harbor, having previously, in addition to my undersigned, 6 civilian informants who constitute two cells ...

"On Nov. 5, at 23:35, he heads to the coast ... At 23:45, the diesel engine noise has probably alerted the ground, the lighthouse of the port of Cortellazzo [near the mouth of the Piave] lights up ... Approach the coast until the boat stops resting in a 6 meter depth, 1.5 miles southwest of the Cortellazzo lighthouse ...

"Because of the sea force 2 and the wind force 4 from the northeast ... I decide to look for deeper seas ... At 01:16 I urged the civilians to promptly embark on the boats to this purpose prepared. Civilians say they do not want to embark on sea conditions, but above all because they do not see the very close coast due to deep darkness due to deeply covered sky, they have the impression that they can not achieve the purpose ... I propose to repeat the attempt near Chioggia; But informers categorically refuse to be landed there, so the boat reaches the proposed dive spot in 50 meters depths ...

"On November 6, at 18:30, a plane flew over to the submarine at about 200 meters. The dive resumes and at 20:30 the boat returns to the surface.

"This second time, also, a aircraft is flying over the boat to the north and at an altitude of about 150 meters.

"Visibility conditions are relatively good; High moon and almost calm sea.

"At the almost certain sighting of the boat at Porto Cortellazzo the previous evening, and the probable consequent alarm, we attribute the double-sighted presence of the aircraft for a systematic search for the submarine.

"... head for the new landing point, established near Cattolica."

The informants landed here without inconvenience, the submarine returned to base.

"Tell about the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice demonstrated by the crew," concludes Commander Galletti, pointing out in particular the failures that have occurred (ultrasonic sounding, maneuvering of horizontal plain always to be handled and, much more seriously, the impossibility of supply of air due to the inability of the two on-board compressors), which, while precluding the possibility of carrying out the mission, did not have a minimum impact on the crew's morale, but they also stimulated tenacity for the crew for the success of the enterprise".

*c) Sub Nichelio (with three successive commanders).*

This submarine also carried out his seven missions from Brindisi. The first at the command of ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Claudio Celli; The second commanded by the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Gaspare Cavallina; The last five by ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Ugo Esmenard.

The missions, carried out between 26 November and 3 December 1943, between 18 and 30 January 1944, between 25 February and 2 March 1944 between 25 March and 3 April 1944, between 21 and 25 April 1944, between May 24 and May 29 and between July 21 and July 27, 1944, respectively, lasted for 162, 285, 142, 210, 93, 122, 149 hours.

The missions had the following goals, almost always successful:

- 1<sup>st</sup> mission: landing two groups of operators in the Upper Adriatic on the Italian coast;

- 2<sup>nd</sup> mission: landing of three groups of operators and recovery of a group in the Upper Adriatic, on the Italian coast;

- 3<sup>rd</sup> mission: landing a group of operators just north of Pesaro;



- 4<sup>th</sup> mission: landing a group of operators in Northern Istria (near Umago) and another group in Central Istria (near Rovinj);
- 5<sup>th</sup> mission: landing of operators with materials on the island of Zakynthos;
- 6<sup>th</sup> mission: landing of operators and materials in Zakynthos (could not be carried out by the defective signal on the ground by those who should have been waiting); of operators with material in Kefalonia;
- 7<sup>th</sup> mission: landing operators with materials in Kefalonia and Zakynthos.

During the first mission, the submarine had to be submerged with a quick dive to the probable sighting of a MTB running at high speed at 04:15 on November 28, 1943. At 03:44 of 29 the submarine saw a wake of torpedo passing on his right; the strong haze preventing him seeing who could have launched it, the submarine lay on the bottom in 60 meters, remaining until 08:00, when his hydrophones no longer perceived the noise of moving ships. On December 2, he was twice over flown by airplanes between 20:00 and 20:30.

During the second mission - in which *Nichelio* performed the three informant landing operations on nights on January 20, 22 and 28, and that of a returning unit of them overnight on January 24 - here are the most salient episodes that occurred.

At 21:15 on January 20 maneuvered for not to be spotted by a patrol boat. At 05:45 on January 22, he saw, without being seen, an enemy motor torpedo boat. At 19:43 on January 23, he heard four explosions of very close air bombs distinctly against the hull sides. On nights 26 and 27 he witnessed violent aerial attacks on coastal locations. At 01:40 of 28 he avoided being spotted by a patrol boat and shortly thereafter was over flown by a large formation of allied aircraft.

During the third mission, the submarine had to escape the possible discovery and hunting by enemy ships three times: February 25 at 16:19 facing a bombing aircraft, the same day at 23:57 in the presence of MTB of unknown nationality, on 26 February at 18:35 facing other MTBs. The disembarkation of the informers north of Pesaro shortly after midnight on 26 February, returned to Brindisi blocked by the high sea

of a Sirocco, who had followed him in the stern during the crossing.

The fourth mission was marked by the following episodes, until the departure from Brindisi the submarine encountered a high sea from the northwest, that is along the axis of the Adriatic. Arrived because of the sea with a lot of delay in the waters of Umago, he waited for sunset of March 29th to make the landing of the operators, which took place at about 24:00 with handy sea when the maestrale fell and having put a wind breeze. Twenty-four hours later, near Rovinj, the second group of operators landed. During the return route in the Adriatic Basin, he was assured of being hunted by naval ships in co-operation with aircraft: sure it was an allied or national anti-sub - given the area close to our bases - the commander surfaced quickly, exchanging the recognition signals with two British aircraft flying over the point of emergence.

There were no major episodes in the fifth mission.

It is interesting to note, in the words of the commander, the way in which the operators landed on the west coast of Zante.

"April 23, 1944, at 00:15. 10 meters from the shore, exactly on the Vrami point. Due to the strong sunrise, I took it to the ravine 200 meters to the north of the set point, although the coast here is much higher.

"Because the Greek officers [who were the operators to disembark] are all in bad condition due to the sea and they do not know how to do anything, so I do not compromise on the outcome of the landing on my boat by my 2<sup>nd</sup> in command sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Edoardo Terzi and helmsman sergeant Ezio Bassi offered volunteers to accompany the operators. My staff practically does just landing and landing all the material at the established point, where the coast is much lower. The sergeant Bassi collapses on the ground due to the fatigue and the pain of various excoriations had in holding on to the rock, in order to support his body with the Greek officers, who are still in worse condition due to the sea.

"At 00:40 the rope tied to the track for faster recovery breaks.

"At 00:50, the operators make the agreed signal. At 01:05 I recovered the boat and went back at the maximum force with the electric motors,

while securing the boat on deck. I see distinctly the operators already on the mountains that intend to transport the various materials”.

The sixth mission would take place on a regular basis if the landing of operators on Zakynthos [Zante] did not have to be abandoned shortly after 24:00 on May 25, at the same point as the previous mission, because from the land there was no response with the appointment signal: Material was already ready in the boat, but had to be taken back aboard the submarine. In Cephalonia, however, the operation was completed by disembarking Greek operators at 04:00 on May 27, without however recovering the boat due to the beginning of dawn.

During the journey across the seventh mission, *Nichelio* was the protagonist of the following episodes. At 11:35 on July 21st (departure day from Brindisi at 07:10), two Spitfire flew over and at the same time spotted 60° to the left of the bow a boat leading to her, trying to attract their attention with oars and shaky clothing to the top. The submarine approached and found that it was a navy sergeant and a civilian escorted from Valona the previous evening, the 22<sup>nd</sup> to escape German persecution. They were exhausted, lacking in food and water. He took them on board, delivering them to Brindisi to our naval authorities on his return to the base. At 00:58 on July 23, at a short distance from the first landing point of the operators, he had to maneuver to avoid being spotted by a motorboat towing two-boat motorboat navigating toward the coast of Kefalonia [Cefalonia], where he did at 02:45 the first landing operation; The second took place at 03:00 on July 24 in the northwestern part of Zakynthos.

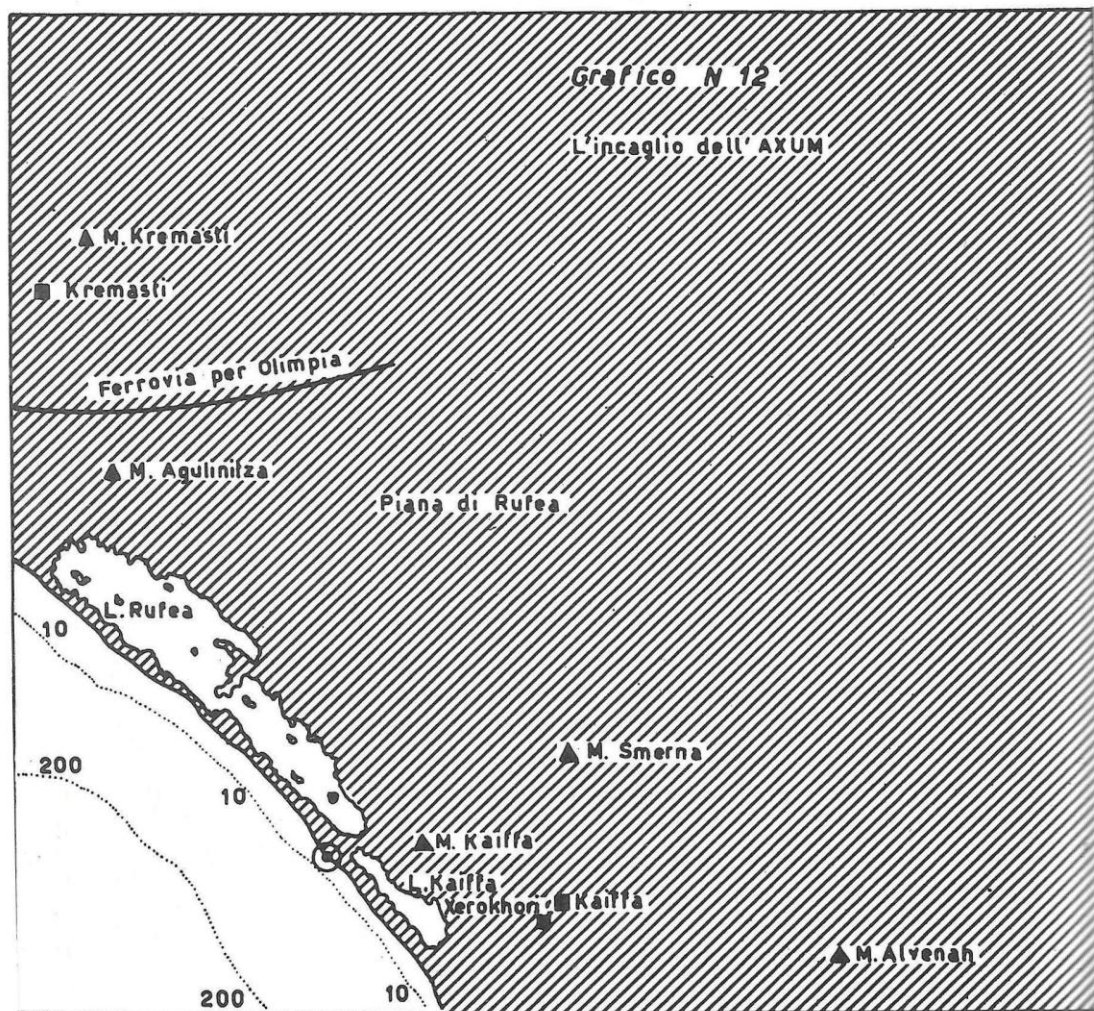
*d) Sub Axum (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Giovanni Sorrentino). (Chart 12).*

This submarine happily made a first landing mission of operators on the coasts of the Andorra between 07:30 on November 30 and 08:40 on December 7, 1943.

She would have to carry out a second one to recover personnel on the Greek coast, but - departing from Brindisi on December 19, 1943 - came back to Taranto on 21 to repair the damage to a diesel engine that had forced him to interrupt the mission.

The third and last mission was the one that led to his loss of blood. It had the same purpose as the previous one, which had remained unfinished. Here's how the facts have taken place.

Map 12



*Incaglio del Smg Axum la sera del 27 dicembre 1943.*

The submarine departed from Taranto on the afternoon of December 25, 1943 to embark some informers in the Gulf of Arcadia (on the coast just south of Zante and Morea).

The Gulf of Arcadia (Greek Kyparissia) is between Cape Katakolo to the north and Cape Kunello to the south: between the two capes are 30 miles. Little to the south of Cape Katakolo lies about 16 miles long at the coast some lakes, separated from the sea by a narrow strip of land covered with pine forests: in the southern part of this area the submarine would have to embark on some informants waiting for him .

On the evening of 27 December, the *Axum* came close to the point set for the planned boarding: the position of the submarine could have been precisely controlled with ground markings taken during the day. Towards 20:00, the connection with English personnel on the ground was established by means of optical signals. Shortly afterwards - as agreed - this lit two lights forming a guide alignment for approaching the submersible.

There was sea strength 3 to 4 from west, northwest wind and poor visibility,

At the appointed point, at the request of the ground crew, the commander set up a pneumatic boat, embarking on an English liaison officer who helped the sea and the wind toward the coast. Waiting for further ground communications, the commander decided to stay on the spot by turning the electric motors in slow motion at a modest speed of about 3.5 knots.

The submarine kept the ultrasound sounding continuously in operation and every 10 seconds was received on the turret of the tower the instantaneous value of the depth.

With two complete laps on the left, while the submarine had the hull parallel to the coast as the last depth measured from below the keel of 7 meters, it was perceived by the staff that was inside a slight sliding on the bottom, to which they followed immediately strikes rather violently at the central part of the boat. This had bumped over a rocky shoal not mentioned in the nautical chart, which was too small; On the other hand there was no hydrographic survey of the area. And in fact, when later a crewman jumped into the water to get to the nearby beach, he found himself in knee deep water, and soon after he met deep waters.

Immediately the commander attempted to disengage by stopping the left electric motor and backing the right electric motor back at the maximum force. But despite the maneuvering and progressive lightening of the submarine with the expulsion of the fresh water supply and part of the fuel oil, disengagement proved impossible. Then the commander ordered the crew to leave the ship and to reach the beach by 22:00. He remained on board until 07:00 in the morning of December 28, with the chief engineer, another officer and a few men.

In the early hours of the afternoon of the same day, 28<sup>th</sup> the commander, the chief torpedo man, English Ensign Roberts, and an officer of the Greek patriots returned aboard to proceed with the destruction of the submarine with the bombs he had been given. The fuses, however, were not lit up at the order of British captain Peters, who had accompanied the commander, claiming that the destruction of the wreck was now within the competence of the British authority. The destruction took place the same night (that is, in the early hours of December 29), after the Greek patriots had removed all the recoverable material from aboard.

The main highlight, taken in the course of examining the causes of the loss, was that it had been very unmanageable to run on the spot a few hundred meters away from the ground without having a carefully drawn a hydrograph map.

The submarine crew was recovered on January 29, 1944 by the TB *Ardimentoso*, who also embarked on the allied staff that was to be recovered from *Axum* on the night of 27 to 28 December. This time, however, the *Ardimentoso*, for insistent suggestion of the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Sorrentino, was taken aboard at a point much further south and hydrographically safe: precisely in Marathopolis, opposite Proti Island. This site was reached, with the assistance of the British secret mission in Greece, with a five-day march through the Morea Mountains, after a British aircraft had parachuted for the *Axum*'s crew in the night of January 22 winter clothes and the shoes suitable for the march.

*e) Sub Platino (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Vittorio Patrelli Campagnano).*

The five missions carried out by this submarine from Brindisi between 26 January and 2 February 1944, between 16 and 24 February

1944, between 19 and 25 March 1944, between April 20 and April 27, and between June 21 and June 29, 1944, respectively, lasting 164, 192, 143, 162 and 198 hours respectively.

The missions, all completed, had the following Objectives:

- 1<sup>st</sup> mission: landing of operators on the west coast of the Gulf of Venice;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> mission: similar to the previous one;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> mission: triple planned landing of operators in Rimini, Cortellazzo and

Chioggia;

- 4<sup>th</sup> mission: landing of operators north of Venice;
- 5<sup>th</sup> mission: transfer of personnel and material to a vessel manned by patriots in the Upper Adriatic.

During the first mission there were no major events, except wind and sea from a Maestrale, which delayed the submarine's march on the first night of navigation and a series of bomb explosions between 12.00 and 14.30 on January 29, perceive when the boat is under water.

The purpose of the second mission would be to land two groups of operators, one on the beach of Cortellazzo and the other near Porto Garibaldi in the area of the Valle di Comacchio. The persistent northeast wind prevented the landing of the first group of three operators in Cortellazzo, both in the night on February 20 and in the following night. Then Commander Patrelli agreed, with the senior American officer on board, that he land on the opposite coast, precisely between Novigrad and Porec, where the operation was completed at 22:00 on February 20<sup>th</sup> (Night on the 21<sup>st</sup>). Meanwhile the wind was falling and the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> at 23.00 the second group of six operators could be landed at Porto Garibaldi.

In the third mission three groups of operators had to be landed: one near Rimini, one near Cortellazzo and one south of the mouth of the Adige, respectively on nights 22, 23 and 24 March 1944.

On departure from Brindisi he embarked on an American officer with 11 operators, of whom 7 constituted the first group.

This first group was regularly landed at 01:15 on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. On the evening of the same day, while the submarine was moving toward Cortellazzo, he saw between 21:12 and 22:17 on the left of the bow a large number of illuminating flares dropped by aircraft not far from the sea, whose glow brightened the horizon

from that side: at that moment it was approaching the landing point of Cortellazzo with normal route to the coast.

"At 23:58 [22]," wrote the commander, "arrived at the landing point, I round aground with the submersible in a depth of 6 meter. Sea breeze and northeast wind with rain make landing difficult. The lower line of the coastline is distinguished by less than half a mile ... At 24:00, a 60-degree latitude of the left-hand side (or southeast) is seen by an unobtrusive silhouette approaching with a narrow beta (1).

"Immediately I order a condition of general combat and I will be ready to maneuver fully with the diesel motors.

"In a slight lightening of the horizon towards the open sea, I recognize in the silhouetted sight a small steamer 1000-1500 tons, navigating parallel to the north-east coast, which passes me 500 to 600 meters aft and shortly afterwards disappears in a mist, cloud cover, I think I have not been spotted.

"At 00:05 of the 23<sup>rd</sup> the boat, with the operators of the second and third group, is put into the sea and heads to the ground. The agitated state of the sea does not affect the successful landing of the four operators. "

On March 25, at 10.50, Platinum was again moored in Brindisi.

"The nighttime aerial activity - the captain wrote in the final considerations - found during the mission, confirmed by the numerous sightings of flares, and was remarkable and particularly intense in the Gulf of Venice. The many flares launched by planes along the coast south of Venice would certainly have affected the third landing at the mouth of the Adige, if they were repeated the following night. In view of that and following agreement with the American officer I decided to land also the third group of operators on the beach of Cortellazzo, thus eliminating the third operation south of the mouth of the Adige".

The four operators embarked on Brindisi for the fourth mission landed northeast of Caorle at 01:45 on 24 April 1944 with great weather.

Only a few minutes later - while the submarine was moving away to start the return journey to Brindisi – the

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(1) The Beta is, by convention, the angle that forms the direct view of the ship towards the ship with the bow of an opposing ship.



commander saw with his binoculars in the direction of the landing point weapon flashes he had distinctly heard.

"As the commander began to hear the gunshots, the submarine was about three miles from the landing point. I think the wake was discovered by some watch, given the absolute calm of the sea and good visibility, and just before reaching the shore. In fact, if the binoculars were able to see the flashes of the shots, it was because these were fired at the sea. The short spell of the rifle fire (about twenty shots in 5 or 6 minutes) makes me think that the target was easily reached and that the operators, who were still unarmed, did not have the chance to get out of the fire."

The fifth mission had a purpose entirely different from the usual one: it was to be on an appointment with a trawler 10-miles above elevation of Porto Garibaldi (Comacchio) to transfer three operators and abundant material for patriots around Midnight on June 24, 1944 (night on the 25<sup>th</sup>), or the next day in the case of a missed meeting, which should have been secured by the exchange of agreed signatures of recognition.

On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> the sea was too agitated to allow the transshipment of men and materials and to hope to find the fishing boat at the appointment. So, with the approval of the American officer who was on the submarine with the three landing operators, it was decided to return the operation to the next night at 22:00.

The night after, at 00:40 on June 26, the submarine spotted the luminous recognition signal at a point that was 4.5 miles southwest of the established one. He approached and found a small sailboat waiting: he transshipped the three operators and a small part of the load, unable to welcome it more. One of those four people on the boat crossed to the submarine in turn. At 02:30 on June 29<sup>th</sup> it was back in Brindisi.

So Commander Patrelli noted in his report:

"The landing operation of the material is not entirely successful, because only a small sailing boat came to the appointment.

"The patriots embarked on it reported to me that they were leaving the mouth of the Po of Primaro along with another larger boat," on which the rest of the material had to be taken.

near the point they estimated for the appointment (actually shifted 4.5 miles for 225°), they heard the engine noise of a patrol boat but had not been spotted because of the dense mist, and immediately after they saw their second boat following them a little more than a thousand meters to behind the sail, most probably because it was in sight of the boat, Then, this second fishing boat was lost to sight, nor did it appear at the place of the appointment. It is therefore considered that it has been intercepted by the German patrol boat and taken back to port.

"At the request of the patriots to come back to the point the next night to complete the landing of the material, I did not consent because of the crescent moon and the impossibility for the patriots to take the sailing boat farther away Ten miles from the coast. They did not want a motorboat heard by the German patrol boats.

"According to their information, in Porto Corsini and in Porto Garibaldi are moored with large German patrol boats that are patrolling along the coast.

"From the considerations now made, it is not appropriate to carry out such missions again, if the vessel intended for the transshipment of the material is not a true trawler, that the possibility of embarking on a big load coupled with that of moving with the engine on accurate and convenient distance from the coast. This is because of the still short duration of the night and the presence of German patrol boats in the area. Very active night reconnaissance with flares use in the sea area north of Ancona".

*f) Sub Diaspro (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Emilio Botta).*

The only special mission was carried out by the *Diaspro* between 17 and 22 August 1944, leaving and returning to Brindisi, with 122 hours of sea.

No major episode occurred, except for some machine failures, which could be quickly repaired during outbound navigation.

A group of operators landed on the island of Zakynthos shortly after 24:00 on August 18 and a second group on the island of Kefalonia at 01:00 on August 20, 1944.

In total, sailors and submarines landed behind the lines, except in error, 254 men of varying degrees, who - depending on the Navy information service, in conjunction with the Army and in collaboration and under the control of the Allies - in addition to fulfilling The informational tasks, established in the busy area a very efficient complex clandestine radio networks. Of these valiant and skillful men, 10 paid for the fulfillment of their duty and 63 on the proposal of the Allied Commanders, received decorations and promotions for the merits of war.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EIGHT DIVISION IN ATLANTIC

#### 49<sup>th</sup> GENESIS AND ORGANIZING OF THE MISSIONS.

The participation of Italian cruisers in Atlantic cruises carried out by United Nations ships for hunting enemy naval vessels was requested by the Commander in Chief Navy of the Mediterranean, Sir Andrew Cunningham, from one of his early talks with the Minister and Chief of Staff of the Navy, of Adm. de Courten at the end of September 1943 (1).

The request of the Adm. Cunningham had initially been for four ships: *Duca degli Abruzzi*, *Garibaldi*, *Eugenio di Savoia* and *Duca d'Aosta*. Since *Garibaldi* needed a long period of work, he designed the *Montecuccoli* as replacement. Subsequently it was decided to limit to two the number of cruisers to be sent first in the Atlantic: *Abruzzi* and *Aosta*. The *Garibaldi* replaced *Aosta* at the end of the work, having the *Aosta* to return to be put back into full working order.

It was established that the cruisers would carry out in turn with English and French ships the intercepting of enemy blockade runners and hunting of raiders in the Central Atlantic, depending on the F.O.C.W.A. (Flag Officer Commanding West Africa) in the area of its operational jurisdiction (see Chart 13)

The F.O.C.W.A. resided in Freetown, which was the base of the British Navy in West Africa, while the base of French ships was Dakar. Our ships would operate from Freetown

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(1) It is interesting to note that, having the Adm. Courten and his immediate adherence to the request, bearing in mind that our cruisers did not have a fully adequate autonomy for the war in the Atlantic, Admiral Cunningham replied: "Yes, but they fight very well and we know a few thing".

and their logistical needs would have been provided by the British Command.

The rules for the execution of the cruises were:

- one cruiser from time to time at sea;
- normal cruising speeds of 16 to 18 knots, corresponding to our ships to the economic one, with two boilers powered by six allowing to reach 20 to 21 knots if needed, more than enough for intercepting the types of enemy ships sought;
- zigzagging along the outbound and inbound routes between the starting base and the cruise zone, for security purposes in the face of any submersible attacks;
- different routes, rationally studied, in the search area, always continuing to zigzag;
- accurate sight and discovery service.

The guidelines for behavior to be observed in the case of sighting of suspected ships such as hauling ships or violators of the blockade had been specified by Adm. Biancheri (Commander of the Division) on December 20, 1941 on the basis of British orders in the subject. In summary, he had ordered:

- at sight, put at maximum speed and turn on all the boilers heading towards the sighted ship, call the crew to combat stations and seal the stop with a cannon round;
- proceed with signal exchange acknowledgment and, if the ship is suspected, stop it and call the captain on board, always holding with weapons pointed;
- open fire in the case of resistance, trying to anticipate the enemy and maneuvering in order to avoid being hit if he reacts;
- if the stop ship surrenders, call the captain on board with no more than 4 men in the boat; Then send a prize crew armed and equipped with food, under the command of a lieutenant with a ensign and an engineer: a total of 23 people of various specialties to control the on-board services of the vessel captured and to take immediate security measures;
- then escort the ship taken to the port that will be indicated;

- in the event of sinking as a result of refusing to surrender, do not immediately rescue the shipwrecked, except in the case of stormy sea.

#### 50<sup>th</sup> EXECUTION OF CROSSINGS.

##### *a) Overview.*

The two cruisers *Duca degli Abruzzi* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Alberto Battaglia), *Duca d'Aosta* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Temistocle d'Aloia) of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division (amm. div. [R. Adm.] Luigi Biancheri) left Taranto at midday on October 27, 1943, Admiral embarked on the *Abruzzi*. After a six-day stay in Gibraltar, also used to supply food and clothing suitable for tropical climates, came to Freetown on the evening of November 13 at sunset. All the transfer was regulated by provisions of the Allied naval Command.

*Eugenio di Savoia* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Ferrante Capponi) and Montecuccoli (cap. vasc. [Captain] Ubaldino Mori Ubaldini), who headed respectively to Port Said and to Palermo, had departed from Taranto along with their cruisers. Performed during the afternoon of evolutionary and gunnery exercises, the admiral had given these two last ships freedom of maneuver to reach their respective destinations.

*Abruzzi* and *Aosta* had found in front of Algiers the *Legionaries* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Amleto Baldo) and *Oriani* (cap. freg. [Commander] Libero Chimenti), who were waiting for them at sea to reach Gibraltar (1).

From Gibraltar, after staying there for a week, they left at 15:00 on November 6, escorted by the two destroyers during the first 24 hours of navigation (ie up to the limit of the Atlantic approach to the Strait of Gibraltar, due to the presence of German submarines) and had arrived at Freetown, as it was said, on the evening of 13 November (2).

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(1) The two DD had left Taranto on October 14 to escort the MS *Saturnia* to Malta. Here the *Saturnia* had landed our 150 sailors in Taranto; then the three ships went on to Gibraltar, with a brief stop at Algiers to resupply the DDs, arriving 18<sup>th</sup>. From Gibraltar, the local British Command sent the DD on 28 October to the 8<sup>th</sup> Division to escort from Algiers to Gibraltar. The *Saturnia* had left for England on October 27 with a troop cargo, passing under the jurisdiction of the British War Shipping Organization.

(2) The two DD returned from Gibraltar to Palermo on November 20, disembarking English war material embarked at Gibraltar.

Cruises began on 19 November 1943 and ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1944. Here, in the following table, Cruises and areas where they were completed.

<i>Cruises</i>	<i>Ship</i>	<i>Departure</i>	<i>Return</i>	<i>Miles</i>	<i>Zone</i>
1	<i>Aosta</i>	19 Nov.	26 Nov.	3007	Zone A
2	<i>Abruzzi</i>	29 Nov.	7 Dec.	3280	Zone B
3	<i>Aosta</i>	5 Dec.	14 Dec.	3442	Zone B
4	<i>Abruzzo</i>	12 Dec.	21 Dec.	3686	Zone B
5	<i>Aosta</i>	18 Dec.	27 Dec.	3367	Zone B
6	<i>Abruzzi</i>	26 Dec.	5 Jan.	4007	Line CH
7	<i>Aosta</i>	1 Jan.	8 Jan.	2800	Line EF
8	<i>Abruzzi</i>	12 Jan.	20 Jan.	3300	Line GH
9	<i>Aosta</i>	12 Jan.	20 Jan.	3200	Line EF
10	<i>Aosta</i>	24 Jan.	31 Jan.	2895	Line EF
11	<i>Abruzzi</i>	29 Jan.	7 Feb.	3680	Line JK
12	<i>Aosta</i>	8 Feb.	15 Feb.	<u>2870</u>	Line EF
TOTAL 39,534					

Adding to this route total of the two cruisers the miles traveled for the two transfers Taranto - Freetown and vice versa, you get a total of 56,985 miles.

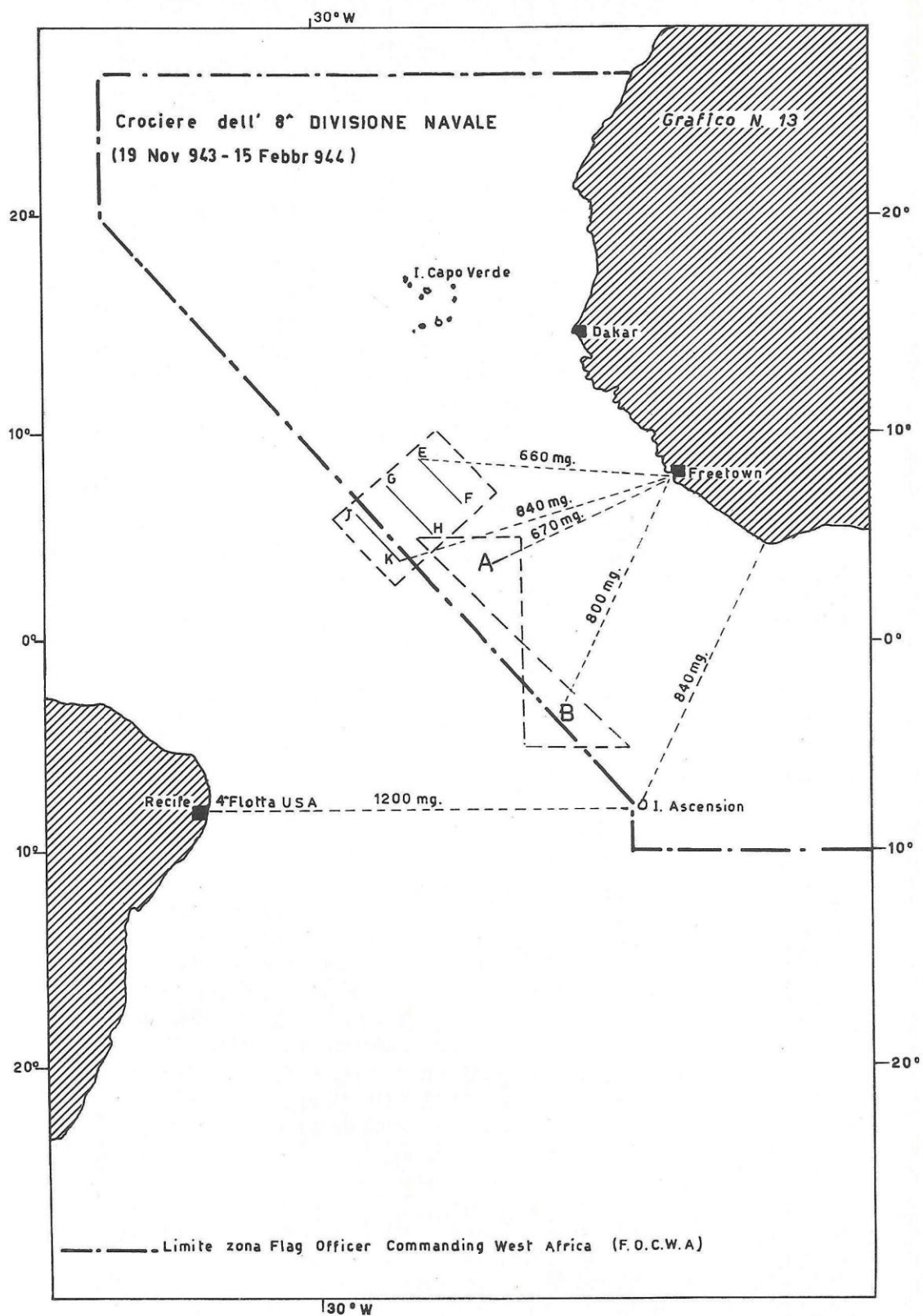
On March 17, 1944, the cruiser *Garibaldi* (cap. vasc. [Captain] Giorgio Ghè) left Taranto with amm. div. [R. Adm.] Romeo Oliva - who had been transferred from the *Eugenio di Savoia*, his flagship ship of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division - to replace the *Aosta*, who would have to return home (as we said) with the Adm. Biancheri, who would assume the command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division.

Things went differently, because in the meantime the allied naval authorities decided to suspend cruises in the Atlantic and the *Garibaldi* did not do anything. For the sole purpose of completing the statistical data on the activity of the three cruisers, we reproduce the *Garibaldi's* route.



# The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

Map 13



<i>Ports</i>	<i>Arrival</i>	<i>Departure</i>	<i>Miles</i>
Taranto	--	11:30 – 7 Mar.	--
Gibraltar	18:15 - 9 Mar.	07:15 – 14 Mar	1,357
Freetown	12:00 - 18 Mar.	17:30 - 25 Mar.	2,300
Gibraltar	17:05 - 30 Mar.	00:05 - 1 April	2,488
Taranto	11:10- 3 April	--	<u>1,388</u>
TOTAL 7,533			

The total travel of the three cruisers for ocean cruises was therefore 64,518 miles.

*b) Cruises of the Abruzzi and the Aosta.*

Adm. Biancheri remained on the *Abruzzi*, after arriving in Freetown, until November 18, 1943; from 19 November to 13 December moved to the *Aosta*; from 14 December to the following 11 January, he returned to the *Abruzzi*; from January 12 to February 7, 1944, again on the *Aosta* and then on the *Abruzzi* until the end of his duties as Commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division on May 31, 1944. Admiral personally participated in almost all the cruises, being transshipped at sea from the *Aosta*, on *Abruzzi* on December 13, when the two ships met while the latter was leaving Freetown for cruise No. 4 and the first returning from cruise No. 3 and had not made any other transshipments when the two ships met at the other overlaps on their departure and return dates to Freetown.

The only cruise, for which the two cruisers took the sea at the same time, was the one between January 12 and 20; but after a joint navigational stretch during which the admiral made some exercises, they separated to take on the cruise line to each assigned (cruises 8 and 9).

Orders for cruises were also issued to our cruisers by F.O.C.W.A.

The Allied Authorities had established that, in the case of tactical action coordinated with ships of other nationality; ours should have executed the orders of the most senior commander at sea, being English or American. For this reason the Adm. Biancheri, after

having courteously made his remarks, he always left the command insignia on the cruiser that remained in port, without transferring it to the one he was on to take part in the cruises.

Because during the period when our cruisers did their business in the Atlantic area of British jurisdiction, no enemy units were intercepted, their cruises took place without tactical events.

Instead, three blockade runners from the Far East were sunk at that time in the area currently assigned to the United States Navy; three more in the northernmost area.

However, in the English area German submarines, sank three United Nations steamers in waters relatively close to the African coasts and very far from the sea areas swept by our cruisers.

If there were no encounter with enemy ships, there were some of them with friendly ships, with exchange of the prescribed signs of recognition: the *Aosta* on 6, 7 and 19 December, 2 and 25 January met respectively the Greek steamer *Lyras*, the English *Dunster Granger*, American Destroyer *Davis*, French cruiser *Suffren* and the American tanker *Norfolk*; the *Abruzzi* on December 14 met with two Allied steamers *Duke of Athens* and *Empire Wimana*, on January 3<sup>rd</sup> she met the French cruiser *Gioire*, the 13<sup>th</sup> the *Suffren*, the 20<sup>th</sup> the French cruiser *Montcalm*, 1 February the steamer *Finn* (Swedish) and the *Monte Mulhacen* (spanish),

Three incidents occurred during cruises, totally different from one another.

On the *Aosta*, during a anti-aircraft exercise conducted with 100 mm pieces on December 11th in the patrol area, a projectile burst in the barrel of one of the pieces with splinter spatter, which killed the gunner Giulio Nibaldi and the sailor Vito Oretano, buried at sea with military honors.

The *Aosta* on December 19, while cruising the patrol area, saw at 22:46 on the left a hull. She turned to approach the ship, which signaled with correct recognition established for the merchant ships. The *Aosta* replied with the red light electrograph, giving the counter sign set for the warships. The sighted ship replied with the group IMI, answering a question. While the *Aosta* was repeating the previous in white light, the unknown ship fired three artillery salvos, fortunately without striking

Meanwhile, as a result of the approach, the *Aosta* was acknowledged that this had to be - given the profile and dimensions of the now distinctly visible ship - of the American Destroyer *Davis*, moving far to the west of the routes he would have to follow. Clarified the misunderstanding with further action signals, the accident closed.

The third accident touched the *Abruzzi*, who had to make the last cruise with the only propeller left in motion, because a lesion that appeared without apparent cause to the starboard propeller forced it not to operate. Probably it was a propeller casting defect, dating back to the year of its construction, that is, about 10 years earlier. However, the ship would have made other cruises under the same conditions as the propulsion apparatus's poor efficiency, had it not been for the order to suspend patrolling in that area of the Atlantic.

*c) The arrival of Garibaldi and the repatriation of the three cruisers.*

The *Garibaldi* left Taranto at 11:25 on March 7<sup>th</sup>, arriving at Freetown at 12:00 on March 18 after meeting the other two cruisers at 09:20 in the ocean and carrying out collective fire exercises against a towed target: the command of training had been taken over by the Adm. Oliva, senior to Adm. Biancheri.

In Gibraltar, the *Garibaldi* had been provided by the British authorities tropical uniforms for officers and crew of 91,500 pounds (about 41,500 kg) and 100 cases of various kinds of foodstuff for the onboard cooperative store. Leaving Gibraltar, the cruiser had fired anti-aircraft at a target towed by an English aircraft.

Just moored units in Freetown, Adm. Oliva was informed by Adm. Biancheri that the previous day had arrived the order of the British Admiral, sent by F.O.C.W.A., for the return to the Mediterranean of the three Italian cruisers.

In accordance with F.O.C.W.A. It was then decided that the *Garibaldi* and *Aosta* would leave for Taranto with Adm. Oliva on March 25, while the *Abruzzi* would leave after replacing the propeller with the new propeller, carried from Italy on board the *Garibaldi*, in the floating dock in Freetown. Thus - with the ministerial approval obtained by exchanging radio-messaging - canceled the transshipment arrangement of the Adm. Biancheri on the *Aosta*, cited in *a)* above.

The British authorities had envisaged the placement of a radar on the flagship: Adm. Oliva, arrived with the *Garibaldi*,

he tried to get it for this ship, but F.O.C.W.A. preferred to put it on the *Abruzzi*. So the *Garibaldi* left for Italy on March 25 without radar with the *Aosta*; but during the stay in Gibraltar, the local British command handed him one that was then installed in Taranto. During the crossing, *Aosta* embarked in Algiers 60 Italians to take to Taranto.

The *Abruzzi* was taken into the floating dock in Freetown on March 31 and remained there until 14 April. The propeller, coming from Italy, could not be mounted because it was not the same as the injured one; therefore, the lesion of the old propeller was repaired. During the stay in the basin was also placed the radar at the expected point of the tree.

The cruiser left for Italy on April 16 at 23:40 and came to Taranto on the 29<sup>th</sup> following, after spending five days in Gibraltar and one day in Algiers. Gibraltar had embarked 46 people of our diplomatic representations in Spain and Portugal; Of these people he had landed 29 passing through Algiers.

And here is how the journey back to Taranto of the *Garibaldi* and the *Aosta* took place.

They left Freetown at 18:10 on March 25, performing as usual various exercises during crossings.

They arrived in Gibraltar at 18:00 on March 30, beginning with the expected supplies. The next morning the Adm. Oliva had spoken to the English admiral whom he had visited, that the two Italian ships would have to depart for Taranto the same evening. First, the *Aosta* departed to stop for about three hours in Algiers to embark 60 Italians to take to Taranto, and then join in front of Algiers with the *Garibaldi*, who would come with a delay.

Thus, *Aosta* left Gibraltar at 21:45 on 31 March and *Garibaldi* at 00:05 on 1 April. At 18:00 on 1 April, the two ships met outside Algiers, continuing along to Taranto.

It should also be remembered that during the first stop of the *Garibaldi* in Gibraltar the English Admiral had asked "in the most discreet and courteous manner" to Adm. Oliva that the ship would surrender 6 sailors (including 2 stokers) to Italian steamer *Edera*, because without this completion of staff, the steamer, who was ready to take the sea, could not leave for the Central Mediterranean.

On 31 March, when the *Garibaldi* was re-emerging from Gibraltar, the *Edera* was still there for a sudden failure in the course of repair: the six men of the cruiser could not be immediately recovered, because they were indispensable during the imminent sailing of the steamer.

#### 51<sup>st</sup> RELATIONS WITH THE ALLIED AUTHORITIES.

It seems that the directive, given by the British Government to the Naval Authorities of Gibraltar and Freetown, was to adopt an attitude of correct but not frequent relations with the Commands, our ships.

In the application of this directive, the English admirals proved to be much more cordial and expansive than recommended, not to say prescribed.

At Gibraltar Vice Adm. Burrough (who was the commander of Force X, destined to protect the convoy that left Gibraltar for Malta at the Battle of Mid August 1942) always showed himself very courteous and provided our ships with food and difficult material. On the way back, he did not return the visit to Gibraltar made by our Admirals, but he invited them to breakfast and went to breakfast on the *Abruzzi* when this stopped at Gibraltar on the return trip.

In Freetown, the office of F.O.C.W.A. was commanded by Vice Admiral Rawlings when Adm. Biancheri arrived. He always proved to be amiable, invitation and he was invited to lunch, but gave the impression of having some distrust.

Two weeks later he was replaced by the Vice Admiral. Peters (coming from Taranto) who immediately testified of spontaneous cordiality, certainly due to the fact that Taranto had realized the commitment and loyalty with which the Italian Navy operated alongside the Allies. There were numerous exchanges of courtesy with our two admirals. Commodore Menzies, the commander of the base and the Freetown arsenal, was far from supporting our ships for their technical and logistical needs: the *Aosta* was also put into a dock for hull maintenance.

As for the Americans, it should be remembered that the commander of DD Davis, who came to Freetown after the accident with *Aosta*, came to the Adm. Biancheri asked him to apologize and wrote a letter to the *Aosta* commander apologizing also to him. For this incident,

he expressed his regret to the British Command of Freetown, from which operationally depended on our ships, for the Command of the American 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet operating in the Atlantic.

It is certain that the long mission in the Atlantic of our cruisers - started just one and a half months after the unexpected armistice crisis, with no change in embarked personnel or any adaptation to material on the ships that had been harshly proven by a long period of war activity - he has validly contributed to reconfirming in the United Nations Commands of time the already flattering concept in which our navy was held. They had to take note of the scrupulous and perfect execution of the orders of the British Authorities, the regularity of the cruises made to the limit of autonomy, the exemplary attitude of the crews and their professional ability, directly attested by the British officers embarked on, with some signalers, for connection purpose.

#### 52<sup>nd</sup> VISIT TO THE CAMPS OF ITALIAN PRISONERS.

Adm. Biancheri easily gained the permission to visit, both in Gibraltar and in Freetown, concentration camps of Italian prisoners of war, collaborating with Allies with work performance.

In Gibraltar he found himself among 500 "comrades in arms" who had just arrived. At Freetown he could go three times in the midst of another 800 soldiers nearby.

His visits, in which he spoke with simplicity and affection, had a beneficial defect on the minds of our men and were appreciated by the British authorities.

He reported that our prisoners-workers, despite their very happy situation, were very good at honoring Italy.

#### 53<sup>rd</sup> TWO PROCLAMATIONS OF THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF GENERAL MARSHAL GIOVANNI MESSE.

At the end of this second part of the book we present two proclamations of the Marshal Messe, which he directed to the fighting forces in the imminence of the liberation of Rome.

The First of May 15, 1944, says:

"Fighters of the Italian Liberation Corps!

"Five months ago the first battalions of the new Italian Army were already giving their blood on Mount Lungo alongside the valiant United Nations, in the struggle against the eternal true enemy that once again oppresses our Italy.

"Since then your ranks have expanded, new units have been added to the early and nowadays infantry, bersaglieri, alpine, arditi [assault], paratroopers, artillery and engineers, representing the ancient and recent specialties of our Army, the sailors of the "Bafile" to renew the actions of your Piave companions - you have the honor and the privilege of assisting with the liberation of the homeland.

"Many other of your companions are ready and willing to join you.

"What you have done to date has already made you aware of the Italians gratitude. But with the great new offensive alliance, new and decisive trials await you, and I am sure that once again, under the sure guidance of your worthy commanders, you will be able to keep up the name of Italian arms renewing the epic gestures of the Carso [Karst], Piave, Grappa and Vittorio Veneto alongside the valiant Allied Armies."

The second of May 28, 1944 says:

"While the troops of the Italian Liberation Corps participate with the United Nations in the great battle that is fought in the name of Rome, my commander heart does not forget all those Italian soldiers of land, sea and air that, along the Combat lines, in the immediate back of the front, at ports and at airports, along the maritime and airway routes, silently give their contribution to the ongoing battle.

"Grateful thinking goes above all to those, drivers and bearers, who in the most tormented areas of the front bring to our advanced units and allies, the indispensable supplies of combat. These drivers and bearers who, with more advanced units have often voluntarily seized arms and valiantly fought, have already given to the Homeland, in the exaggeration of their hard work, many dead and injured. It is, this, new Italian blood generously spent to redeem the right to life of the new Italy.



"All these true fighters know that their silent sacrifice is by all Italians known and appreciated, and they derive from this new certainty the power to continue tough, until their victory, their fruitful work."

## PART III

### THE PARTICIPATION IN THE FIGHT OF THE PATRIOTS

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE WHOLE OF THE SPIRIT OF THE PATRIOTS

#### 54<sup>th</sup> THE FORMATIONS OF THE PATRIOTS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES.

In order to better understand the work done by many - belonging to the Navy - they are voluntarily included in the volunteers of liberation formations, or have contributed to the realization of the great purpose, it is appropriate to summarize in its general lines the struggle sustained with so much tenacity and with great valor from the patriotic formations, they have made an important contribution to the regular troops in the liberation of Italy and their actions are chronologically recorded in the volume published in 1949 by the Historical Office of the Army entitled "Cronologia della seconda guerra mondiale. "

This volume is exclusively used in this paragraph, clarifying that it will not return to the work carried out by the N.P., as it was dealt with in paragraphs 45/19 and 46.

#### *a) Organization of patriots.*

The first nuclei of patriots emerged, immediately after the armistice, in those areas that, for environmental conditions, bestowed on life and action: the Alpine valleys, the Apennine hills and the big cities. Initially, these military corps, *generally formed by military officers commanded by officers disarmed and captured by the Germans*, were gradually added to former prisoners of war, formerly condemned politicians, outcasts, men led to action, and so on.

From the very beginning, groups of bands in the Alpine valleys and mountain ranges of Veneto, Venice Giulia, Liguria, Romagna, Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzi,

Outside the borders of Italy, many of the Army units were in common cause of their own initiative, with patriotic formations in France,

in Yugoslavia, in Albania and in Greece, continuing with the struggle against German forces.

The Italian Supreme Command soon became aware that all these regional initiatives had to be regulated and supplied with adequate amounts of means and weapons, and on 10 December 1943 the Chief of General Staff, Marshal Messe (with agreement of the allied commanders ) Issued directives for the organization and conduct of the guerrillas with the aim of, among other things, "to give an structure and unitary impetus to the war by coordinating the actions carried out in the German occupied territory with those units from the liberated territory".

To this end, 9 Regional Commands (Piedmont and Liguria, Lombardy, Veneto and Basque Trentino, Venice Giulia, Emilia and Romagna, Tuscany, Marche and Umbria, Rome, Lazio and Abruzzi) were directly constituted by the Italian Supreme Command. The basic tasks assigned to these Commands were to give the formations a unitary address, to coordinate their activities, to establish the number of bands and to fix their areas of action, to achieve relations with the Supreme Command and through it with Allied Commanders, to keep in close contact with the clandestine Political Authorities gathered in National Liberation Committees (C.L.N).

Specific rules were issued for the performance of these tasks on relations between the military commands of bands and political parties, the struggle against fascists, support for former allied prisoners, the organizational and operational modes of bands, Industrial activity, propaganda, funding, administration, military information links service on the enemy, between the Supreme Command and Regional Commanders.

Following the directives and standards received, patriots widened their range of action even in flat areas and small cities, linking relationships between themselves and with the organization of the clandestine resistance front, and to achieve a single front, both to receive from these organizations the means necessary for the conduct of the guerrilla war. The formation of the patriots was thus approached by C.L.N.

Until May 1944, the whole of the patriotic activity had been characterized by a "resistance movement", but in June - following the organic and operational measures adopted and the resulting upgrading and development - tended to become a "Liberation Movement". Then C.L.N.A.I. (Upper Italy National Liberation Committee, which was constituted in the meantime

as coordinator of the C.L.N. Provincial) thought it would be useful to form the "Voluntary Liberation Corps" (C.V.L.) which assembled in a kind of voluntary para-military Grande Unit all existing and future formations, and meanwhile established that in its Central Military Committee there was a "Military Adviser". He chose General Raffaele Cadorna, requesting him from the Supreme Command. On August 12, General Cadorna was parachuted into Val Cavallina (Bergamo) and assumed at C.N.L.A.I. the charge to which he was appointed.

In order to develop the activities of the patriots, two combat groups were formed within their formation; the G.A.P. or Patriot Action Groups and S.A.P. or Patriotic Auxiliary Unit.

The former had the task of the most daring sabotage actions, as well as participating in guerilla warfare; were normally hidden in the wooded and woody areas, which constituted - so to speak - their bases of operation from which they moved to perform their surprise attacks.

The latter was entrusted with the "plain work," which consisted of gathering information, interfering with the military activities of Nazi-fascists, in trying to escape capture the G.A.P., collecting and dropping supplies to the formations of isolated working patriots, seeking to disband and disarm the black brigades [Fascist Militia] by converting the followers to the good cause. This activity of S.A.P. could not be done without serious risks and rarely without harsh fighting.

In October 1944, the Allied Command, in the imminence of the winter doldrums of operations-having found that the development of the Liberation Movement had gone beyond any expectation, what ratio of patriots to operations had been "generous, active, and commendable", several times the patriots had been called upon to cooperate with the Allies, that the patriots' action would certainly be "useful and effective" in the future operations - came to the determination to maintain the Liberation Movement and put it in the condition to survive the winter period.

Thus, in early November 1944, what had been called a "Movement" was transformed into a "Volunteer Corps of Liberty" (C.V.L.) by implementing the idea advanced by the National Liberation National Committee in June. The Command of C.V.L. was entrusted to General Cadorna, accompanied by two deputy commander:

Ferruccio Parri and Luigi Longo, respectively, of the Party of Action and the Communist Party.

Immediately after the constitution of the C.V.L., and precisely on November 12, Gen. Alexander, Commander XV Allied Army Group in the Mediterranean, broadcasted a radio message to the patriots, with whom - after having traced a brief overview of the operations carried out on the Italian front, the tasks assigned to his troops and the results achieved, and after giving a fair recognition of the patriots contribution to the fight against the Nazi-fascists - officially announced the stand: it was winter and gave guidelines for guerrilla actions to be carried out compatible with seasonal conditions.

Finally, the functions and responsibilities of the organs operating in occupied Italy were definitively established in a signed agreement on December 8 between a delegation of C.L.N.A.I., arriving in Puglia, on 17 November. It was made up of A. Pizzoni, who with the pseudonym Longhi, presided over C.L.N.A.I., by Ferruccio Parri (Maurizio), Gian Carlo Paietta (Mare). He was received by Gen. Alexander, by the members of the Allied Control Commission, by Ivanoe Bonomi (President of the Council on 10 June 1944) and by various Ministers. After three weeks of negotiations, the signing of the aforementioned agreement was signed by the Allied Command to C.L.N.A.I. As his agent in occupied Italy and set his duties and prerogatives, while the Italian Government attributed the power to represent anti-fascist parties and designate him as his representative in the fight against nazifascists in Italy not yet liberated.

*b) The activities of patriots.*

It is summed up in a series of blows of each type that will be quoted in a statistical form in the next paragraph, and in a series of clashes with Nazi-fascist units, many of which occurred during the raids they resorted to disperse, not eliminate the partisan formations.

The first major battle was committed in September 1943 at Boves (Cuneo) by a group of officers and soldiers against a German column, causing losses: the Germans, in retaliation, burned many houses in the country.

From then on, the struggle did not stop and counted well 390 large-scale raids, divided between all the regions of Northern and Central Italy until the founding of the Gothic line (August 1944) and among those of Northern Italy alone after the constitution of the Gothic line.

Of these raids, the first 10 were carried out by the Germans in October 1943 (2 in Piemonte, 2 in Lombardy, 3 in Venero, 1 in the Marches, 1 in Umbria, and 1 in Abruzzo). The series of raids closed in March 1945, with about twenty such operations throughout northern Italy.

Sometimes the patriots were forced to disperse (and then gather at the end of the raid) without being able to offer valid resistance; Sometimes they were in a position to face the enemy, often with success.

Special mention is made of the following fights caused by raid operations:

- Three in January 1944: in the Triora area (north of Sanremo), where about 1500 Nazi-fascists, including 800 anti-Bolshevik Cossacks, lose 400 men; In the Pellice Valley, where 2500 Nazi-fascist can not go back to it because of the strenuous resistance of the patriots northwest of Intra,, where a German division, after twelve days of bloody struggle, succeeds in dispersing the patriots who suffer the loss of 80 fallen and 100 shot.

- One in March 1944: in the province of Modena, where 3000 Nazi-fascists leave on the ground 300 men in several days of struggle and set fire to over a hundred homes for retaliation.

- Three in September 1944: in the Langhe (Cuneo), Val Maira and Val Cannobina (Lake Maggiore), where they are cut off three attempts to raid with heavy losses for the Nazi-fascists.

- Four in November 1944: again in the Langhe, where well over 20,000 Nazi-fascists suffered heavy losses in eight days of fighting; In the area of La Spezia, with hard losses to the enemy; around Torriglia (Genoa), where a Mongolian Division framed by officers of the Germanic S.S. and reinforced by Nazi-fascist elements loses over 1,000 men against 250 patriots; In the Valleys of Tidone and Trebbia where 30,000 Nazis in ten days of struggle lose many hundreds of men.

- Two in December 1944: in the Langhe, where the Nazi-fascists leave 300 men on the ground; In the province of Piacenza, where 8,000 Nazi-fascists lose 350 men and leave 100 prisoners in the hands of the patriots.

- One in January 1945: in the area between the Vara, Taro and Magra rivers, where 10,000 Nazis and Mongols are forced to give up the raid before the reaction of the patriots.



In addition to these raid -related fights, there were many others involved in real attacks - on one or the other side. The main ones were:

- What started in the Alps Cuneensi on March 15, 1944 and lasted until April 8th. More than 20 thousand Germans - with armored vehicles, artillery, air force and special S.S. Alpine brigade - they succeed in dispersing the patriots who lose 400 men among dead and prisoners, but they lose more than 1000 men and abundant material.

- On April 20-30, 1944, in the area of Nocera Umbra. Two German divisions reinforced by Fascist militia battalions undergo significant losses, killing 500 patriots and injuring a hundred.

- That end of May 1944 south of Bologna. The patriots, attacked in several places, succeed in repelling the attacks with minor losses, while 354 deaths and 600 wounded are reported by the Germans, as well as numerous vehicles captured by the patriots.

- That of June 24, 1944 in Val Masino (to the west of Sondrio). Patriots reject an attack by inflicting on the enemy the loss of more than 200 men and subjugating them to a lesser extent.

- The next day, June 25, north of Massa.

The patriots kill 180 Germans.

- That of 19 July 1944 in the area of the Middle Tagliamento. Three battalions of patriots attack violently three German columns, forcing them to retire with significant losses.

- That lasted from July 30 to August 3, 1944 in the southwest of Modena. It was one of the most bloody battles. Huge Nazi-Palestinian armored forces invest in the area now indicated. The patriots resisted fiercely in subsequent clashes, but the enemy ultimately prevails, not without leaving 2000 dead on the ground. The losses of the patriots are limited to 400 deaths and 100 wounded.

- That of 8 – 15 August 1944, in the confluent valleys towards Monginevro. Nazi-fascists, with 6000 men supported by tanks and air forces, end up prevailing. Simultaneously there is a similar operation in the Val Stura, with high losses on both sides.

- Between August 20 and 25. 1944 there were fighting in the Cuning Islands, Lanzo Valleys, Friuli, Grappa Massif and the Cisa Pass. The patriots were able to repulse

the attacks on the nazifascists almost everywhere, inflict losses greater than those suffered.

- That which took place between August 28 and September 4, 1944, between Conegliano and Vittorio Veneto. Against over 200 Nazi-fascist deaths, there are 100 dead and injured patriots.

- That of September 3 - 10, 1944, on the Sette Comuni Plateau. Nazi Fascists are defeated with 200 deaths and 250 wounded.

- From September 5 to 30 there are numerous fights in southwestern Piedmont. Heavy losses are inflicted on Nazi-fascists,

- The Grappa Massif is the scene of a new series of fights between 21<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September 1944, against 10,000 Nazis who lose about 1,000 men. Patriots, though having suffered less losses, are forced to temporarily disperse.

- Between September 23 and 30, all the patriotic deployment between Cividale and Tarcento is attacked by powerful Nazi-fascist armored forces. After three days of fierce resistance, the patriots have to retire to Basso Isonzo after having inflicted on the enemy the loss of 450 men.

- The operating cycle in the area of Lake Maggiore, which takes place in two phases: the first between 4 and 10 September and the second between 9 and 23 October 1944.

The patriots, with a vast offensive operation, occupied Cannobio and Malesco on September 7, Piedimulera and Mergozzo, who capitulates on September 8 and 9, forcing the German garrison of Domodossola, strength of 700 armed and equipped men, to yield and occupy the city.

On the 9th, the Germans are on the run after concentrating in the area 13 thousand men belonging to selected troops. The fight ends after two weeks with the success of the Germans, whose losses exceed 2000 men. The patriots, though overwhelmed, left only 300 dead in the field, plus 100 shot in retaliation.

- In the fight of 2 to 3 December 1944 in the Massa and Carrara area, the series of important actions of consequence. The patriots reject the attacks of the Germans, inflicting them serious losses.

Special mention is the complex operating cycle, which took place between mid-August and mid-September 1944 in Piedmont and Liguria in conjunction with the allied landing in Provence. We quote it with the words of the volume "Cronologia della seconda guerra mondiale".

16 August. - The operations agreed between Allied and Italian commanders and patriots in the Italian-French border area, and in particular in the alpine valleys, in collaboration with the allied troops deployed in Provence, are commenced with the task of attacking the main roads and railways between Italy and France.

The Patriots of Piedmont and of Liguria, with their determination and discretion, have achieved remarkable results: the interruption of numerous roadway and railway communications, which is the gateway to important crossings; unbroken attacks on garrisons, supply columns, isolated detachments. The enemy movements, where they are not paralyzed, are subjected to delays, obstructions and deviations that seriously obstruct the opponent's plans, which, in order to cope with the threat, is forced to distract considerable forces from the operating sectors.

In particular, from August 16 to September 15, Italian patriots carry out the following actions:

- in connection with the French "Maquis" they support harsh battles against German troops at Colle Argentera, Piccolo and Gran San Bernardo;
- in Aosta Valley, the intense activity forces the enemy to increase the strength of the garrisons;
- violent attacks against Nazi-fascists near Novara, Biella, Casale Monferrato, Alba, Turin, Vinadio, Mondovì, Cairo Montenotte, Genoa and Val di Taro;
- the constant threat to the Monginevro passage forces the Germans to employ a few thousand men;
- the valleys of Susa, Chisone, Varaita, Maira, Grana, Stura, Vermentagna are occupied by the patriots. The Germans, after serious efforts, are able to re-establish a partial control;
- occupation of the Maddalena Hill for whose reoccupation the Germans have a strong share of a Division;
- occupation of the Colle di Tenda;
- occupation of numerous Langhe towns;
- numerous road and rail interruptions, bridges and destruction warfare, the loss of men inflicted on the enemy,

Finally, we mention the places where liberation was due solely to the valor of the patriots or in which they came into function

avant-garde of Allied Forces: Foligno (mid June 1944), Nocera Umbra (July 1st), Gualdo Tadino (July 5), Florence (August 4, limited to part of the city on the left of the Moon), Omegna (12 September), Oggebbio Modena, Reggio, Parma, Asti, Sarzana, La Spezia, Ferrara, Domodossola, Genoa, Ventimiglia, Sanremo, Biella, Milan, Vicenza, Turin, Italy (September 14), Torriglia (3 November), Varzi Padova, Udine and many other big and small cities (last weeks of April 1945)

On May 2, 1945, hostilities ceased as a result of the armistice signed in the Royal Palace of Caserta on 29 April. Here is the text signed by the allied and German military authorities:

- "1<sup>st</sup> - Unconditional surrender of all the German forces of the southwest front.
- "2<sup>nd</sup> - Ending hostilities at 2 pm on 2 May.
- "3<sup>rd</sup> Immediate immobilization and disarmament of all Germanic forces.
- "4<sup>th</sup> – Obligate the German Commander-in-command [Gen. Von Vietinghoff] to execute any further order of the Supreme Allied Command.
- "5<sup>th</sup> - Punishment for any disobedience to the orders, according to accepted laws and uses of war."

#### 55<sup>th</sup> THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRUGGLE SUPPORTED BY THE PATRIOTS.

From what has been set out in the preceding paragraph, it is clear that the contribution of the patriots to the war for the liberation of Italy after 8 September 1943,

The contribution was particularly decisive in northern Italy, not only because the struggle continued until the final victory (while in Central Italy the constitution of the Gothic line was stopped in August 1944, as allied troops advanced with C.I.L. aid liberated the various locations), but also because patriotic formations have been expanding as time goes by and refined in their organization, methods of use, logistical measures, information services on movements and intentions of the enemy.

It seems almost unbelievable now that it has been possible to organize, arm and supply many volunteers, to give them directives and orders for coordinating the initiated operations and for their synchronization - when necessary - with the operations of the Allied Armies:

almost incredible, let's say, if you think that everything was supposed to be overcome by the vigilant arrogance and the undoubted military ability of the Germans.

It is true that - apart from damage and loss to the enemy - the contribution of the patriots was of great importance because they had immobilized in the rear areas a large amount of German forces; otherwise they would be available to act on the main front of fighting allied troops.

It strikes the fact, by reading the chronological synthesis of events, that losses caused by the enemy have always been higher than those suffered. This was due to the peculiar character of the partisan struggle, all surprised and ambushed, requiring, therefore, flexibility, intuition, timeliness, decision, ardor and acumen: all qualities of which the Italian people do not lack.

In addition to the actual war operations, with prevailing guerrilla characteristics, the patriots have undergone a massive sabotage activity, which according to the volume of the Historical Office of the Army, from which the chronology was taken, is summarized in the following operations of a "certain consistency":

- sabotage to lines and railway works	280
- sabotage to railway rolling stock	189
- roadway interruptions	214
- attacks and sabotage on car traffic	185
- Sabotage at power stations and power lines	46
- actions against various objectives	<u>371</u>
TOTAL	1285

In addition to these, thousands of sabotages and disturbances of every kind are counted on the activity of Nazi-fascists, of lower consistency, not included in the statistical listing now reported.

Thus, from the volume "Il secondo Risorgimento" (published in 1955 on the initiative of the "Committee of Ministers responsible for preparing the celebration of the ten years of Resistance and the Return of Democracy in Italy"), the following interesting elements emerge.

"At the end of March 1945 the Command of the Volunteer Corps of Liberty can draw the balance of the last months of struggle. The actions taken since June 1944 are:

6,449 surprise attacks,  
5,571 sabotage,  
16,000 enemies killed.

"To this data should be added to those related to booty:

10 cannons,

286 machine guns,

1107 light machine guns,

6505 rifles,

2483 pistols,

847 cases and 7639 quintals of ammunition,

And here - always according to the text of the same volume - what we can call the statistical synthesis of the Golden Band of Resistance:

- Patriots fighters fallen	35,828
- Wounded and invalids fighting patriots	21,168
- Civilians killed for retaliation	9,980
- Civilians wounded and disabled	412
- Patriots fallen overseas (predominantly in France and in the Balkans)	32,000

As for the consistency of patriotic forces, we cite the following pages from the book "Storia della Resistenza italiana" by Roberto Battaglia, published in 1953.

The author on pages 336-339 cites an appreciation of the Patriotic Forces made in June 1944 by the state's army of the republican socialist on the consistency of the "rebel forces", which he considers to be corresponding in the great lines to reality. Here is how our author expresses it:

"On the *situation of the rebels of June 15, 1944*, written by the "Stato maggiore esercito: Ufficio operazioni e addestramento", the general data of the new situation are therefore very clear. The document denounces "a total of the rebels, according to the latest reports of approximately 82,000, an increase compared to the previous situation of 27,000 men" and attributes this increase to the recalls of the 1920, 1921, 1926 classes "who wanted nothing to do with going to Germany," to the "deserters of the Republican Armed Forces (which is a first acknowledgment of the Resistance's ability to regain the "lost generation" for the cause of freedom), to the "reinforcements" arrived from Switzerland (which it is instead one of the many inventions with which the propaganda of Salò\* is pleased to deceive himself). It goes on to say that a "division of the rebels by regions" is in line with the reality: "The uprising of the rebels by region is as follows: Piemonte 25,000 (increase of

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\*The republic of Salò (or capital of the Italian Social Republic of Mussolini)

15,000 compared to the previous situation); Liguria 14-200 (increase of 7,000 compared to previous situation); Venice Giulia 16,000 (no changes have taken place); Emilia and Tuscany 17,000 (an increase of 4000 compared to the previous situation); Venice Euganea 5600; Lombardia 5000 (2000 increase compared to the previous situation). In total, as mentioned above, 82,000 rebels in continuous increase (1). The current force of the rebels is slightly lower than the current strength of G.N.R. [Republican National Guard] in Italy, ascending to 93,000 men, of whom 48,000 are dependent on the Germans and 45,000 under the dependencies of this General Staff, largely immobilized in the territorial organization. "It is then found, bitterly stated, A continuous increase in the efficiency of the rebels" (attributed to the "systematic burglary of the barracks" and to the "periodic aerial supply" and to the framing of the leaders "of command by British and Slavic officers", which is a completely fantastic because the latter. "The widespread extension of the areas of action" ("The entire provinces such as Venice Giulia, Aosta, Cuneo and Imperia, as well as a large part of Turin and Piacenza are almost at the mercy of the rebels, whose raids, which push their incursions deeper into the Po valley and threaten the communications between Italy and Germany ") and finally "the daring and the ever-increasing effectiveness of the actions", in a paragraph that is worth it in its entirety. In fact, the first "statistical data" on the Resistance were included, when the newly established CVL General Command did not have that network of links and information needed to translate partisan warfare efficiency into numbers: "A clear idea of the rise of the intensity of rebel activity is given by the rise of the number of rebellious demonstrations since April. From 1942, rebellious events passed 2035 in May to reach 2200 in June (The latter figure still incomplete). (2) The increasing drift of partisan action is due to the frequent attacks recently carried out on ammunition depots

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(1) In April 1945 the Command of C.V.L. gave the official figure of 111,000 patriots regularly framed (63,000 in the mountains and 48,000 in the inhabited areas). There was then a large number of patriotic forces not regularly framed. (Note from the U.S. [Official History]).

(2) It seems to have to interpret these figures in the sense that in 1942 were the rebellious actions recorded until April 1944, which were added 93 in May and 165 in June 1944 (except for a greater number of statistically significant figures). (Note from the U.S. [Official History]).

and munitions of the Army. Overall, in June, 17 attacks on ammunition depots and 24 armed guerrilla attacks were carried out. It should be noted that in previous months such actions represented exceptionally sporadic cases. A few days ago, the episode is undoubtedly ardent, that of the successful aggression by the rebels to the Germanic Command of Bra. The increasing effectiveness of the action of rebels needs to be examined in relation to the following objectives, which aim to achieve the action itself: *a)* Disruption of Republican Armed Forces. This objective for perpetration (*sic*) by the rebels through propaganda to the desertion made in recent times by rebel elements infiltrated in the ranks of the Army. The threat of retaliation against the members of the armed forces and their families. The attack on the barracks and accommodations. The assurance of impunity to the soldiers who in case of aggression does not offer resistance (this system has brought its sad fruit in the famous episodes of Italian units under German dependencies in Liguria). On the whole, one can not but recognize that the disruptive action of the rebels towards the Armed Forces should be more and more increasing. *b)* Sabotage on the communications of the Germanic army operating on the Italian front. From the rise to such an activity is a clear sign of increased sabotage on road and rail communications and telephone lines since April: from the 189 sabotage acts in April, it is 241 in May and 344 in June.

The adversary's recognitions have an incontrovertible demonstrative value.

But, at the end of this chapter, some acknowledgments of the Italian and allied Authorities should be brought back.

On 18 February 1945, the "Partisan Day" was celebrated in Rome, the President of the Council I. Bonomi spoke, the Minister of War A. Casati, and the Minister for Occupied Italy M. Scoccimarro.

The President of the Council stated what Italy had done since September 8, 1943, and what was preparing to do for the liberation of the national territory and for the definitive defeat of fascism.

He, amongst other things, said: "Our fleet, obedient to orders, sailed to the designated ports under the bombs of German airplanes, paying in austere silence his heavy tribute of blood."



Our aviators recovered the fragile remnants of their aircraft to make themselves available to yesterday's enemies. The army, who had come out of a three-year war in which he had buried men and means, knew in a few months (a miracle that is not easy to find in history) to resume with the few surviving units in his structure, his makeshift weaponry and, more surprisingly, his warlike soul, who has been able to transfigure in that Italian Liberation Corps, who has marked with his blood the long march from Garigliano to the Marches. To crown this Renaissance of the Homeland, to give her the splendor of the heroic epic, spontaneously arisen from the fruitful womb of our people, the partisan movement ... ".

On February 27, 1945, Churchill, in a speech to the House of Commons, said: "But it would be right if I did not pay homage to the unmistakable services of which the whole story can not yet be told that the Italians, Men and women of the armed forces, on the sea, on the ground and behind the enemy lines in the north, continually make the common cause,

At the end of April 1945, Marshal Alexander (Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean War Theater since November 26, 1944, replaced by American General Clark in his former post as Commander of the XV Army Group in Italy; in turn, Clark had successor to command of the American Armed Forces of General Truscott) addressed the patriots the following message:

"With your courage, with your spirit of initiative and with your abnegation, you have accelerated the liberation of your country. The United Nations and Italy thank you. You've done a great job, following the best Italian traditions; but your mission does not end with the expulsion of the Germans from the Italian soil. It is expected that Italian patriots - who, with their weapons in hand, inspired by their ancient traditions of valor, have had a heroic part in the liberation of their country - are the first to collaborate with the allied military government ... ".

On 2 May 1945, the President of the Council Bonomi sent to Marshal Alexander a message in which he said among other things: "Italy is proud to have fought alongside the United Nations, its sailors, its aviators, its patriots revolted in the name of freedom and democracy."

On the same day the US Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, J. Grew, in a statement to the Press, said: "The overwhelming defeat of German armies in Italy - which has contributed so much to energy,

the courage and the sense of responsibility of Italian patriots - has resulted in the liberation of northern Italy. Italy, which fought the common enemy since 1943, is now free from the German yoke."

On May 4, 1945, the British Ambassador to Rome Sir Noel Charles conveyed to the Prime Minister Bonomi a congratulatory message from British Prime Minister W. Churchill "for the complete liberation of Italian territory from our common enemy and especially for the part carried out by the forces of the Regular Italian soldiers and patriots behind the lines."

#### 56<sup>th</sup> THE PARTICIPATION OF THE NAVY PERSONNEL, VIEWED AS A WHOLE.

Various and complex was the participation in the partisan struggle of naval personnel remaining in the territory occupied by the Germans in Italy, France and Yugoslavia.

Of these personnel, only about 10% served in the armed forces of the socialist republic: but most of them were driven, rather than conviction, by economic and family needs. Others did so with the intent to preserve as far as possible the patrimony of the Navy: in fact, the presence of Navy men in the offices, archives, and facilities of any kind prevented tampering and removal on part of the Germans.

The remaining personnel abstained, with a thousand folds and often facing risks and discomforts, from giving any form, even indirect, of collaboration. Amongst this, the most ardent and willing - often favored by the circumstances and luck combined with the initiative - was organized into clandestine groups of resistance and struggle, or joined the wider organization of the Volunteers of Freedom.

As the individual's initiatives were consolidated and coordinated, they became increasingly frequent and profitable with the Navy and the allied forces operating in Italy, which had been liberated.

In Rome, shortly after the armistice, at the initiative of some officers overtaken by the capture, there was gradually reconstituted an information network, including civilians, which eventually included all the Italian territory occupied by the enemy and operating in connection with the Allies, mainly informants - Referred to at the end of paragraph 48.

In addition to this information service, the Navy's clandestine personnel carried out, in the framework of the struggle of the patriots, the following main types of activities characteristic of all guerrillas:

- exchange of aid, in the form of moral and financial assistance, distribution of false identity documents, of falsified ration cards, clothing, food, illegal housing, etc.;
- the establishment of armed bands with various tasks;
- assistance to people of every social category sought by the Nazi-fascist police;
- assistance to allied prisoners escorted from concentration camps;
- theft of documents and removal or sabotage of materials in the interior of commands and enemies establishments;
- actions aimed at safeguarding Navy's technical and logistical facilities from enemy sabotage;
- real military operations (sabotage, ambush, attacks and fights).

All this complex and meritorious activity consists of such a large number of events and collective and individual episodes that can not be analyzed and described without dedicating some volumes. Therefore, in the following chapters, we will limit ourselves to give a broad picture with the citation of only really salient episodes.

In 7000 men and 500 officers, they took part in the partisan struggle. Of these, 795 and 51 respectively paid with their life with dedication to the cause of freedom; More than half were shot by Nazi-fascists.

If the aliens mentioned above are added to those who were immersed on the ground and on board for warlike events of every species after 8 September 1943 and until May 8, 1945, there are a total of 4766 men killed for the homeland in that period, of which were put to the sword 31 officers and 400 soldiers of the C.R.E.M.

Less fortunate than those children of the sea who could fight with their weapons in hand or in any case give their work for the regain of democratic freedoms, but no less worthy of being remembered were those (and were few, of all degrees) who - captured by the Germans - preferred to endure the deprivation and horror of German exile in Germany until the end, instead of obtaining the liberation at the price of their honor of Italians and soldiers adhering to the cause of Nazi-fascists

One and the other - the patriots and the interns - must be considered with equal respect and gratitude because they have been men and soldiers in the best way possible by the conditions in which they were found, showing devotion to the cause of the Homeland and the spiritual ideal of the unity of the Navy.

About 3000 military decorations for valor (including 32 gold medals) were granted to navy personnel for participation in the struggle for liberation, both in naval bases, on ships, and in the struggle alongside the patriots.



## CHAPTER X

### THE CLANDESTINE FRONT OF ROME

Under the name of the title of this chapter three organizations will be included:

- the Clandestine Resistance Front of the Navy (F.C.R.M.), also including three operating groups, belonging to the Adm. Emilio Ferreri;
- the Anti-sabotage Group of the headquarters of the radio-telegraph center of Santa Rosa, directed by the Captain of Naval Weapons Giuseppe La Marca;
- the Clandestine Information Service (S.I.C.), headed by the Commodore. Francesco Maugeri, former head of the S.I.S. (1).

The second was a direct emanation of the F.C.R.M. the last one operated autonomously, but in strict relation with the F.C.R.M.

#### 57<sup>th</sup> THE CLANDESTINE RESISTANCE FRONT.

##### *a) Summary outline.*

As mentioned in paragraph 18 - b, Adm. div. Emilio Ferreri had left the position of Commissioner for the Navy on 30 September 1943.

During the period of his stay in the Ministry - as Secretary General until September 14 and Commissioner from 15 to 30 September - he had already taken, among many, three measures: the first two of financial assistance to staff, the third of a "resistant" nature:

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(1) The Information Service -of the Navy was then indicated with the initials S.I.S., which meant Secret Information Service, to distinguish it from that of the Army indicated by the initials S.I.M., which meant Military Information Service.

- Correspondence of advance payments (according to the Ministries of War and Aeronautics) on the basis of three monthly payments to all officers and non-commissioned officers in permanent service, of two months to the officers of the complement and to NCOs and common, one month and a half to the reserve officers and the non-commissioned officers.

- Correspondence to the families, residing in Rome, of the soldiers who were overseas and beyond the borders of Italy or in areas of the national territory with which communications were not possible, half of the global allowances provided for in the war for the military head of the family (as it was established for the families of the missing or interned or prisoners).

- Passive resistance to repeated German intimations for the delivery of the two lists of officers present in Rome with relative addresses; the lists ended up not to be delivered and to be destroyed (there were in two copies: one was later from cap. vasc. [Captain] Giulio Cerrina Feroni, Deputy Chief of Staff, the other from Adm. Div Angelo Parona, Director General of Officers). Between 8 and 30 September the roles had been destroyed with the addresses existing in the competent archives, as well as all the documents which, if found by the Germans, could have brought harm to the country and to the individual officers.

A third list, which - after insistence and threats - could not be delivered to the Germanic Command, was that of personnel belonging to some special departments of the SIS, a staff well known by the Germans: but, before delivering the list, said staff was warned of the imminent delivery and advised to give himself to the bush.

Leaving the office at the Ministry of the Navy, the adm. Ferreri continued to keep in touch with officers and non-commissioned officers, who used him for advice and help.

In early October he had an interview with the Colonel of the General Staff Giuseppe Cordero di Montezemolo (shot on March 23, 1944 at the Fosse Ardeatine), which then by order of the Supreme Command held contacts with political parties and gangs of patriots who were forming, and at the end of October he resumed contact with the Adm. Maugeri, who with a group of his former employees of the S.I.S. an informative job had resumed with difficulty for those who fought against the Nazi-Fascists (regularly framed in the allied and national forces, or in the patriotic formations).

In December 1943 and in January 1944 the work of The Clandestino Front arose in October (in the form of mutual assistance between clandestine and often wanted Navy personnel) and officially constituted on 1 November (on the initiative of the cap. freg. [Commander] Paolo Comel di Socebran assisted by ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Enzo Berlen and the captain commissioner Alberto Mastrolilli, and then encouraged by Mr. Ferreri) in the three main forms of assistance, information and operations (main purposes: sabotage and anti-sabotage).

On 21 January 1944 Adm. Ferreri received through Col. Montezemolo a telegram from Minister de Courten for appreciation of what he had done up to that moment and an exhortation to continue. He then considered it necessary to expand the field of his activity and took over the direction of the F.C.R.M., with whom he had already been in contact since 20 November, in which he had as his right-hand man Commander Comel. He immediately entered into relations with personalities (industrialists, bankers, etc.) who could give financial aid, and with the Army General Quirino Arnezzini who, by designation of the Supreme Command, assumed the command of the Clandestine Resistance Front in Rome in those days. It was the care of Adm. Ferreri to maintain the F.C.R.M. on a plan of rigorous non-political, taking care only of the higher interest of the Fatherland.

Both with the Gen. Arnezzini, and with the Gen. Roberto Bencivenga (who replaced him on March 24, 1944) he kept himself in continuous relations to regulate the clandestine activity and to establish what to do in the critical period of passage of the Capital from the German domination to the Allied liberation. Adm. Ferreri also maintained a connection with the Generals Oddone and Cappa, respectively heads of the Army and Air Force's Clandestine fronts. To cap. freg. [Commander] Renato Cordero di Montezemolo (brother of the hero shot at Fosse Ardeatine, who was in Toulon at 8 September - see paragraph 19-a) was entrusted with the connection between the Navy Front and that of the city.

The meetings between the Adm. Ferreri and the aforementioned generals took place in the most disparate places to depose the Nazi-Fascists, who were looking for them. Gen. Oddone was arrested at the end of May 1944 with many of his collaborators, and only the liberation of Rome, which took place a few days later, saved the admiral and the other generals from being captured in their turn.

They gave a wide collaboration to the F.C.R.M. the ammiraglio di squadra [ Vice Adm.] retired Giulio Valli and ammiragli di divisione [Rear Adm.] Angelo Parona and Carlo Giartosio,



*b) Assistance activities.*

825 soldiers were assisted; 204 officers, 327 sub-officers and 249 non-commissioned officers and common.

The assistance consisted of financial aid, distribution of false identification and work documents, distribution of ration cards and provisions, free health services for the military and their families, etc. 20 former allied prisoners escaped from concentration camps were also protected and assisted.

Especially the work of cap. freg. [Commander] Comel, the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Berlen and captain Commissioner Mastrolilli, exposing himself to continuous risks. In medical services, the distinguished physician Mario Massani was distinguished.

The money began to flow on November 25, 1943, when Adm. Valli handed over to Captain Mastrolilli the first 6000 lire (equivalent to about 350 thousand today, if they are matched to the cost of living). On the eve of the liberation of Rome, 5,415 million had been collected and distributed (around 250 million today).

*c) Information activity.*

All information was transmitted via clandestine radios to the Command of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army.

They concerned: movements of German troops within a radius of 50 km from Rome; situation of the airports of Lazio; location and consistency of magazines, ammunition depots, car parks, concentrations of tanks, military workshops; position of ground minefields; timetables of railway and road installations and structures; railway movements of military interest; etc.

The collection of this information mainly provided the operational groups, as mentioned in the next paragraph.

*d) Operational activity.*

For this activity, three armed operational groups were set up:

- group of guardiamarina [Ensign] Giovanni Fantin (located at the Arco di Travertino near the Via Appia Nuova);
- group of Lieutenant Commissioner Franco Petrucci (located on the Appian Way);
- group of assistant chief Pietro La Gioiosa (located in the Triumphal District and on Via Aurelia).

So writes Adm. Ferreri on the genesis and tasks of these groups:

"The operational duties that the R. Navy took, in agreement with the Heads who followed the Central Command of the Clandestine Front of Resistance, were: the staffing of C.R.E.M. And anti-sabotage activity.

"The problem of classification was difficult for the number of sailors present in Rome, the difficulty of concealment, the greatest danger their young age exposed them, and the inability to assure all of their livelihoods.

"Not being able to deal with the problem in full, it was solved for a part of them by creating a small CREM detachment in a peripheral area of Rome (Via del Travertino's Gate - Porta Furba), thanks to the collaboration of guardiamarina [Ensign] Fantin and non-commissioned officers Gennaro Barone Lumaga, Basilio Brake and Nando Fidani.

"Approximately 90 sailors were seized in this area, divided into groups commanded by sub-officers; cafeterias were created, whose food was largely provided by the National Liberation Committee, was distributed clothing and created a core of armed men, led by Navy officers ...

"At the time of the Allied landing at Anzio, which allowed for a near solution to the Roman question, in order to be able to complete the preparations for the planned actions, it was necessarily to depart from the absolute restraint that was imposed during the previous stage; this caused an infiltration of a spy, such a nurse Lelio Giusti, resulting in a denunciation that led to the arrest by an S.S. unit of Baron, Freni and three sailors.

"The other groups were able to escape capture, but the organization was embarrassed in its consistency, leading to a serious crisis in the group of organizers, who had to immediately take further precautions.

"Very good behavior of those arrested who, subjected to interrogation and torture, did not reveal anything.

"A second center of organization was organized by the lieutenant commissioner Franco Petrucci, who gathered around himself about 40 men - officers, non-commissioned officers and sailors - for their accommodation, assistance and armament.

"A third group was finally organized by the chief aide, Pietro La Gioiosa, and was about 30 people strong, who enjoyed full assistance and for whom the provision of weapons was provided,

"Anti-sabotage activity should tend to substantially avoid damaging the works of the Navy existing in Rome. From the Central Command of the Clandestine Front of Resistance was then assigned to the Navy the task of proceeding, at the time of the liberation of Rome, to the employment of the Ministry and the "Grazioli Lante" barracks.

"To do this, the following measures were taken:

- he came in contact with the captain of the carabinieri Giacomo Parmegiani, who stationed 50 men at the Ministry;
- he was allowed to join and adhere his men to the republic;
- directives were given to him so that at the right moment he could take control of the situation of the two buildings.

"The buildings of the Ministry was occupied by the Petrucci Group, which had the vehicles already established.

"The occupation of the CR.E.M. Detachment [Grazioli Lante barracks] was entrusted to cap. vasc. [Captain] Giulio Ghiglieri, with the collaboration of some officers and the operation of the La Gioiosa Group ...

"The occupation and garrison operations all took place

As expected. "

And now, here are the main events of each of the three Operating Groups (emerges from the following, some inaccuracies, of little account, contained in the synthetic exhibition of Ferreri, who could not know certain details).

a) *Fantin Group*. It reached the maximum of 120 men. He started his welfare activity in October 1943, which began to become operational in November. The headquarters of the Command is the house of Giuseppe Barone Lumaga, brother of one of the sub-officers, located in Via dell'Arco di Travertino.

In February 1944, two patriots, named after Trussi and Fassi, joined the group. The spiritual care of the staff was assumed by Monsignor Desiderio Nobel, who with the example and with the word urged him to action, until - actively sought after by the S.S. -

he had to leave the area and take refuge in a religious institute. A civilian, Mr Umberto Cicerchia, was the trustee for the supply of food.

Fantin and Baron Lumaga had, at the beginning of November, in the house of the Adm. Parona was a meeting, which was also attended by Adm. Ferreri, Commander Comel and Capt. Mastrolilli: In the meeting were set up guidelines for the group's strengthening and for its duties.

Before being discovered in February 1944, the group could be equipped with sub-machine guns and ammunition in the Cinecittà area on 4 November, cut off the Rome-Cassino German telephone line in mid-December and spread three-point nails to a 5-km stretch Via Appia, to deactivate mines under the Torpignattara railway bridge on January 15 and to supply weapons and ammunition on January 20 and 23 in the Acquasanta area and south of the Fort Ardeatine, to kill a German spy on the night of 17 February.

On February 22, 1944, was arrested the sub-officers Baron Lugama and Freni, the sailor Sandro Angeli and the two patriots Trussi and Fassi were arrested. They - especially the first - lengthy interrogations with the barbaric methods of the dismal prisons of Via Tasso - but nobody spoke.

The Arco di Travertino area remained guarded by the Germans for about a month to prevent any resumption of activity.

Frequently the group was visited by Commander Comel, who in early February - at the request of Baron - had instructed the group to take care of the cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Franco Micali and the sottotenenti di vasc. [Ensigns] Gaspare Castagna and Aldo Macchiavelli.

*b) Petrucci Group.* He came to the force of 61 men, of whom 44 were in arms. Located on the Appia Street, it could be equipped with vehicles for quick trips.

He managed to sweep up several times a large number of weapons and ammunition on several occasions, hiding in various places - ready for use, including the Verano cemetery.

In the imminence of the liberation of Rome, it established the link between the Clandestral Front Command of the city and the Provincial Food Section to ensure the custody of food deposits at the time of the transfer. Also on June 4 were disarmed some German soldiers, occupied the building of the Navy Ministry, near which at 22:30 supported a fire action with the German rear guards, in which was injured

Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Elio Paccara. Immediately afterwards transported into the Ministry the light weapons and ammunition recovered from the Artillery Directorate.

*c) La Gioiosa Group.* It was made up of 28 men and operated, having its base in the Triumphal Quarter and towards Aurelia Street.

It also managed to accumulate a considerable amount of weapons and ammunition.

On the evening of June 4, it occupied, as expected, the navy's barracks, after having captured and interned some soldiers of the socialist republic in the morning.

During the night between 4 and 5 June, there were three clashes: the first at Milvio Bridge with a patrol of 5 German soldiers; The second at the Risorgimento Bridge, in collaboration with 10 American soldiers and a sottotenente [2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant] of the Finance, against 10 Germans mounted on three lorries, killing three, injuring two and making the other five prisoners; The third in Piazza Bainsizza against two Germans leaving in the hands of the group a jeep.

Finally, on the morning of June 5, was captured 15 German soldiers in Madonna del Riposo (Via Aurelia) and – with the assistance of elements of the Petrucci group - disarmed 40 Fascist police soldiers.

*d) The particular cases of cap. comm. Giovanni Makaus and cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Luigi Vivaldi.*

They deserve a note of the events of these two officers, who - accidentally encounters in Chiusi on 2 December 1943 - ended together, first in the Tasso prison and immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch of the Regina Coeli, guarded by German gendarmes, where there were for 104 days.

Capt. Makaus was on September 8 in Pola at the Submarine School, as head of the administrative service. When he departed on the *Eridania*, he followed the events until he arrived in Venice (see paragraph 22 - d), where he managed to escape capture by the Germans hiding in a galley wardrobe and descending disguised as a gondolier as a "mouse" that had brought a load of vegetables to the steamer on the evening of September 20<sup>th</sup>.

Having been brought to Florence after having obtained fake identity documents on December 2, he departed by train to Rome with the intention of crossing the lines together with two youth resisting the call of

Fascist call-up (Mario Bucci Casari and Piero Borgogna), who was the bearer of a message to the Allies from the Marquis de Medici, leader of a band of patriots of Grossetano.

The train stopped at Chiusi and here Makaus met Commander Vivaldi, who set the date for a meeting in Rome, where both were direct (1).

However, while Commander Vivaldi was able to reach Rome with a means of fortune, Capt. Macau and his two companions with other means of luck ended up in the Avezzano area. From here, after a thousand vicissitudes they managed to reach Pisterzo (village of Prossedi in the province of Littoria, now Latina), staying on a farm owned by the Bucci Casari family. From here, noting the impossibility of continuing to the south by sea, the three went to Rome to seek some financial help.

In Rome, on December 22, Makaus met with Commander Vivaldi on the 23<sup>rd</sup> returning to his two companions at Pisterzo, where they came to Nivivals on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Makaus, who had reconnaissance along the coast between the Circeo and Sabaudia buff, He met again with Commander Vivaldi on December 27 and was determined to attempt to depart for Ponza (18 miles of sea) the following night with a boat bought by a fisherman; but at the last moment he did not deliver the boat and returned the money for fear of retaliation by the Germans.

With this project failed, the two officers attempted the enterprise along the coast between Circeo and Terracina with the support of engineer Queirolo (cap of compl. Army) commander of the patriot band of Circeo.

Makaus and Vivaldi were arrested by a Gestapo patrol in the hotel where they were staying and stayed three days in the Littoria security room, believing them blacks marketers. Finally, they were released on 11 January, with obligatory sheets: Vivaldi for Bologna and Makaus for Fume.

Of course, as soon as they were free, they returned to the Circeo area and on the evening of the 12th they were hosted by the farmer Semenzin, of Queirolo's band, who had put them at their disposal

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(1) Captain of Corvette [Lt. Commander] Vivaldi on September 8, 1943, was found in Bologna under license for the death of his mother, granted by the Command of the *Montecuccoli*, on which he was embarked on as a gunnery officer. After he went to Cattolica, looking in vain for a sea vehicle to get to the south, he reached Rome: during this trip he met in Chiusi with Makaus.

trusted guide a sottotenente [second lieutenant] of the sappers, patriot. The latter vice versa betrayed them and had them arrested, indicating Vivaldi and Makaus to the Germans as naval officers about to escape and Queirolo as head of the partisan band.

Taken on a German truck, they were brought to Rome via Tasso and immediately to Regina Coeli, as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph.

On April 26, after an interrogation, under the auspices of the events unfavorable to the Germans, they were released.

Vivaldi and Makaus came into contact with the Clandestine Front of Rome, where Makaus performed a profitable activity; Vivaldi presented himself to the Navy's Barracks on the morning of June 5 offering his co-operation to cap. freg. [Commander] Ghiglieri who commanded it; Makaus reached the Navy Ministry's Palace on the evening of June 4 and the morning after the barracks.

#### 58<sup>th</sup> THE ANTI-SABOTAGE GROUP OF SANTA ROSA.

Here's how this group ran and worked, according to the report of the Adm. Ferreri, "The radio-telegraph Center of Santa Rosa, who for a long time had hosted the Supermarina country headquarters, was well known to the German Command for its perfect and grandiose cave facilities. It had thus constituted one of the immediate objectives of the Germans who occupied it since the morning of 10 September 1943 [see Paragraph 18 - a].

"The long-term Nazi occupation provided for measures taken to remove the most precious material and to destroy the facilities at the time of retirement.

"In order to protect and rescue the Navy's relevant interests and to avoid any major destruction, Commander Comel of Socebran took the initiative to make an anti-sabotage action there from December 1943; My approval.

"The first news on the situation in Santa Rosa was collected by sending two informants (civilian volunteer Turi Basile and lieutenant quartermaster Mario Riboulet), who came in contact with some Navy soldiers who were already there, after 8 September they had found shelter at some peasant families at La Storta [the small suburb of Rome on the way that

leads to Santa Rosa]. These were Lieutenant Electrician Leo Giannoni, chief carpenter Alfredo Zizzari, electrician sergeant Egisto Bianchi and sailor Domenico Borgosano. All were immediately available to the Navy Resistance Front.

"As a first measure, it was decided to bring these personnel to the service of the Germans working at the Santa Rosa facilities. The initial distrust of the Germans was overtaken by the Lieutenant Giannoni, who managed to take on first Bianchi and then Zizzari and Borgosano.

"In short, they were able to gain the Nazis' confidence and was able to provide the first accurate information. It turned out that the most precious works had been removed, the robbery continued and the tunnel and the works were mined with numerous explosives.

"The work of a technician who was chosen in the person of the indispensable Captain of Naval weapons Giuseppe La Marca, who - for his feelings, the spirit of initiative and experience - gave the best trusts of success.

"He tried to get hired as a worker by the Germans. He did not succeed, but he only got to be presented to them as Bianchi's brother.

"In this way, he moved to the area and could have hidden observations that allowed him to realize the situation."

The March reported to Commander Comel the results of his findings by mid-January.

"The anti-sabotage plan was extremely arduous and difficult because of the dangerous nature of it and for the continued surveillance by the Germans: nevertheless, it was decided to go immediately to action.

"Sergeant Bianchi was able to remove the trigger device of one of the mines under the tunnel; it was handed over to Captain La Marca who, with him in Rome, could study it and draw it in the slightest details.

"At the same time, the drawings of electric circuits, which were found in high voltage cabins and behind energy distribution boards, were taken away. These drawings were also delivered to Captain La Marca, who could finally submit to Commander Comel to a complete anti-sabotage plan [follows the description of the plan].



"Discussed and approved the detailed arrangements for the plan, Captain La Marca had an order to send precise instructions to the employees.

"This immediately went to work, and with a methodical and constant work, carried out stealthily and under very dangerous conditions, he managed to complete the planned operations in about a month.

"The mines in the gallery were all deactivated: the smaller ones were removed or replaced, the electrical circuits were interrupted in 160 points in an unobservable manner and many conductors damaged...

"When the tunnel was stripped of almost everything it contained, it was used by the Germans as ammunition, fuel and food storage, while the outer buildings of Santa Rosa and the surrounding area were used to accommodate a park - workshop for repair of motor vehicles, tanks and artillery.

"In the second half of May, it became known that, in carrying out a mined area test, the Germans had realized that they had been played. In order to avoid reprisals, staff was removed; only Lieutenant Giannoni was in the area, in order to monitor the moves of the Germans".

The liberation of Rome occurred before the Germans succeeded in reactivating the explosive devices, as Captain La Marca on the morning of 6 June 1944 when he arrived at Santa Rosa at the command of a unit of the F.C.R.M.

If the explosion in Santa Rosa had taken place, a huge catastrophe for a wide area would have been produced for the huge amount of explosive accumulated in the tunnel.

The Anti-sabotage Group personnel were all decorated for valor: Captain La Marca was awarded the Gold Medal.

59<sup>th</sup> CLANDESTINO INFORMATION SERVICE (S.I.C.).

Adm. Maugeri, shortly after the proclamation of the armistice, bothered to bring together some former officers of the S.I.S. (Captain Carlo Garcia, Commander Mario Vespa and Commander Guido De Finetti) to help and assist the personnel who, having lent his work to his orders, had been forced to stain after having destroyed the S.I.S. archives;

shortly thereafter, he had the idea of resuming information activity for the benefit of the legitimate government and the Allies.

In short, the group of S.I.C. came into existence with 30 people (20 officers, 7 sub-officers, 3 C.R.E.M. military personnel), already part of the S.I.S. and partly new followers. To this group 6 officers of the Army and 28 civilians, including 12 women almost all linked by bonds with officers and non-commissioned officers of the S.I.C.

In the early days of November 1943 the Admiral managed to contact Col. Cordero di Montezemolo and with the informational organization in Rome of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army. At the same time he informed Adm. Ferreri of his initiative and asked for provisions.

In order to gain access to profitable agreements with the Authorities of Liberated Italy, they were sent beyond the lines - navigating them by sea with an allied naval vehicle - two officers (cap. freg. [Commander] Luigi Filiassi and ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Aldo Cippico) who presented themselves to Minister de Courten. It was not possible to establish a permanent link with him, for various difficulties not easily overcome, but the mission was very useful.

It was also possible to set up information centers beyond the lines, namely in Liguria (ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Augusto Migliorini), in Lombardy (cap. freg. [Commander] Giovanni Dessy), in Tuscany (cap. freg. [Commander] Roberto Servadio Cortesi and cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pier Luigi Tavanti), in Switzerland (magg. a.n. [Major (naval weapons)] Carlo Ferrari).

The S.I.C. succeeded in carrying out valuable information work by sending to the South, by means of clandestine radio, the news gathered by his agents and by F.C.R.M.

The men and women of S.I.C. actively sought after by the Nazi-fascists, had to resort to a thousand stratagems to stop their activity: 12 times Adm. Maugeri was forced to change the headquarters of the organization.

The most dangerous time, resulting in a functional crisis, took place on February 18, 1944, when the Gestapo arrested the parents and wife of Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Giuseppe Libotte, a cousin of Capt. Vespa, the sister of cap. freg. [Commander] Carlo Tucci, Commander Giovanni Vaccari, and Commander Ezio Bonfanti of the Italian Company of navigation. Incarcerated in Tasso Street and subjected to torturing interrogations, they acted heroically: in particular we remember the Libotte family, held for 28 days, Mrs. Tucci for 56 days and Vespa's cousin for 106 days.

Other components or collaborators of S.I.C. were caught, questioned and then released. The only one that was barbarously executed was Major. a.n. Alfeo Brandimarte, shot on June 3, 1944 at La Storta: fatal destiny, since immediately after Rome was completely liberated. Before joining the organization of the S.I.C, he alone had built and arranged an underground radio with which he had been broadcasting reports of serious danger to the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Command. Tireless, fearless and excellent technician was one of the leading amateur collaborators of Adm. Maugeri: it was for his merit if he could connect with Minister de Courten and if he could equip the radio Information centers established outside Rome. To the memory of the Major. Brandimarte was awarded the gold medal for valor.

After the Major Brandimarte, who sacrificed for his dedication to the Homeland, Adm. Maugeri puts in the forefront - among the staff - cap. freg. [Commander] Giulio Sandrelli who "still convalescent from a serious operation he placed himself under his orders; He has done his job as a Information unit deputy in an exceptional way; Very active, balanced, tenacious, fearless and serene even in days and hours of greatest danger ...; His example was a powerful example to all employees".

## CHAPTER XI.

### PATRIOTS OF THE NAVY IN OCCUPIED ITALY

In some paragraphs of Chapter VII it was possible to describe the aid to patriots through special missions and participation in activities related to those of the patriots of men in the NP units: these men were, however, soldiers regularly framed in the Navy, Just as Lero's defensive fighters were, deservedly but improperly honored as patriots.

Below they will be recalled, broken down by regions, those who most distinguished themselves as volunteers in the struggle for liberation and who, of course, had end warfare, military decorations. It is not possible to remember all because it was thousands of "sailors" of every grade (see paragraph 56).

#### 60<sup>th</sup> IN PIEDMONT.

In the area of Alexandria - Valencia, one of the main players during the events that took place in the final phase of the struggle for liberation was contramm. [Commodore] Massimo Giroi.

To the armistice he was the head of the Department of Supermarine Operations. He had become Chief of Cabinet of the Adm. Ferreri, when he had assumed the office of Commissioner for the Navy, and remained in his work until September 30, 1943 (that is, until Ferreri did not leave the office) despite his very poor health conditions. The same September 30, he was hospitalized in the naval auxiliary hospital of the "Cesare Battisti", from which he was released on January 19, 1944 (after the hospital was closed) with six months of convalescence. Suspended and supervised, for refusing to take on important assignments by Salo's Navy and for refusing any request for membership when he was still in the hospital, he had gone rambling through Rome, Liguria,

Piedmont and Lombardy, also trying to reach free Italy by sea, not being in physical condition to face a long risky land trip to cross the lines.

In mid-November 1944 he had settled in Acqui, where on the night of 12 March 1945 he was arrested by the Italian S.S. and transplanted to the penitentiary of Alexandria, from which April 20 had been able to be admitted to the hospital in the city for the generous intervention of the hospital director, prof. Manai, The room, assigned to him in common with other suspected patriots, was guarded by Fascist militia sentinel. The arrest had been determined by his clandestine patriot activity, carried out during his pilgrimages and especially in Lombardy (paragraph 62).

In the hospital, April 24 had succeeded (with the aid of a guard) to escape immediate shooting by Italian S.S. militiamen., who had come to kill him together with other political prisoners who were hospitalized, hiding in the hospital's underground. Immediate contact with C.P.L.N. (Provincial Liberation National Committee), who resided at the hospital itself, was entrusted with the military command of the Alessandria Fortress.

And here's how the events took place, according to the report of Adm, Girosi:

"The military situation was rather difficult for the following considerations and mainly for the geographical position of Alessandria, which has always been a focal point when in the Ligurian and Piedmontese it was fought:

*a)* presence in Alessandria of a strong German garrison at the command of a colonel, gathered in a few buildings of the city, with entrenchments, barriers and many heavy and lightweight automatic weapons;

*b)* the transit of all Italian and German troops and political forces (black brigades) retired from Liguria and leading through Alessandria to the bridge of Valenza on the Po to cross the river. It was the entire "San Marco" Division (of the valorous regiment of the regular Navy), at least one Division and half German, plus a few hundred black brigade men and the "X Mas" [usurping of the name of glorious formation of assault means]. Generally speaking, for local arrangements that passage of the various crossing areas, these troops were undisturbed or almost in the area of Alessandria;

c) presence at Fort Bormida of a considerable explosive deposit, guarded by the Germans, who had the order to make explode. If that had happened, much of Alessandria with its inhabitants would have been destroyed.

“On the other hand, the forces that could immediately be settled were realized in about 800 men S.A.P. [Patriotic Auxiliary Service], full of armed spirit and ardor, but not sufficiently armed to face in open combat militantly armed and well-formed soldiers, as were those in transit. Partisan brigades were coming in, but no precise news was given, totally missing any means of communication, which was not the case of some relay.

“As a positive factor, it was to be counted on the unconditional support of almost all the population ....

"In agreement with C.P.N., the following directives were based on the appreciation of the situation:

a) to avoid, as far as possible, any destruction of the city and its principal services and industries;

b) to obtain the surrender of the enemy forces and the liberation of the city and the area before the arrival of allied troops;

c) to minimize the loss of human lives among the glorious partisans, using only if strictly indispensable to armed force;

d) temporarily to allow the influx of partisan formations, or at least to be able to accurately account for their consistency and location;

e) contact with the Allied liaison service, for any aerial support;

f) to prevent the moving forces from passing the Po and gravitating to other areas, where it would presumably would have been fought.

"On the basis of these military-policy directives, the following measures were taken:

1 - Immediate mobilization of all S.A.P. formations and employment of works of public interest. This mobilization took place quickly and perfectly, thanks to Mr. Berardinelli, commander of the S.A.P. thus, on the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> and the following night, the power plants, the gas, the aqueduct, as well as the important military warehouses were safely guarded, all of which were saved with material worth several tens of millions.

2 - Order all workers, employees and executives to save their industries, by all means.

3 - The occupation of the blockades held by the Germans, which happened with short skirmishes, but happily.

4 - Severe provisions for the maintenance of public order, in order to avoid looting and robbery.

5 - Blow the bridge of Valenza on the Po, to prevent the retreating troops from going to Val Padana. This brilliant operation was completed on the night of the 27<sup>th</sup> by a small group of patriotic defenders.

"At the same time, the inglorious escape of all the public authorities of the republican pseudo-government in Alessandria began and the subsequent military occupation of public buildings.

"In the meantime, through a priest, the request to the C.P.L.N. from Colonel Becker, German Commander of the Alessandria Fort, for an meeting. The Committee decided to join and delegate for the negotiations its member Dr. Fadda and the undersigned. The first contact took place in a neutral place, that is, in the sacristy of the Duomo. The German side was clear about taking time to wait for the Allies to arrive, not wanting the Germans to surrender to the Italian liberation forces. For our part, in order to get reinforcements, it was also convenient to gain some time, so it ended a kind of 24-hour truce, during which they pledged each other not to commit acts of hostility, it required the Germans to remain in their enclosure and marked the routes that the German troops in transit had to carry out. This path was limited to the external ring. These conditions had been accepted ...

"Taking advantage of the truce, it was better to occupy the strategic points and the goals to be safeguarded. Through the commander of the S.A.P., the yield of the Germans who presided over Fort Bormida ended, thus eliminating this grave danger to the city. In the meantime Mr. Giuseppe Longo reached Alessandria, who assumed the chairmanship of C.P.L.N. quickly informed of the negotiations, he approached them fully. In the meantime, contacts were also made with Italian members in connection with allied aviation and it was decided to avoid, at least until new order, any bombing of the city, which had already been tried, but to proceed with machine-gunning and bombing the roads required by enemy troops in movement.

"The first Partigian Brigades, including the 181<sup>st</sup> Garibaldina and Mauri formations under the command of "Mimmo" (Cigliano), begin to flow to Alessandria, all of which was estimated to be able to quickly have about 2000 men, Small compared to the enemy forces.

"The 27<sup>th</sup> the negotiations are resumed. The Italian side includes President Longo, Fadda learned and the undersigned, as well as the partisan commanders "Aldo" (Pochettini) and "Mimmo" (Cigliano). By the opposite side, Colonel Becker already mentioned, General Hildenbrandt of the German "Lombardy" Army Corps, General Farina Commander of the "San Marco" Division and Major Maiella. The German general is clearly drunk [he wanted to stun because he had a few hours before learned of his son's death on the Russian front] so much so that Colonel Becker feels somewhere to apologize. The opposing tactic is always dilatory with the aim of waiting for the arrival of the Allies.

"Partisan troops are impatient and full of fighting ardor. The atmosphere of the city and neighboring countries is fiery. There are moments that recall stories heard or read by children on the epic of the Risorgimento. Citizens, women, boys, without distinction of social classes, with ribbons and cockade and armed with the few weapons they were able to seize, are all ready for battle, and if necessary in the extreme to sacrifice of their lives and their city, to finally get the right to feel and to be free.

"Negotiations last the entire 27<sup>th</sup> and are resumed in the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>. They have a dramatic character and they are often on the point of breaking. President Longo, diplomatically aware of the ultimate ultimatum: annihilation or attack! General Hildenbrandt reports that he has targeted his batteries on Alessandria. He is told that even if the city is destroyed, they will succumb to the attack and pay the stake for further destruction they will cause. The partisan troops are now waiting and ready to attack. A German truck attempting to enter the city is halted by the partisan fire with dead and injured, and the remaining occupants' are captives. The President of C.P.L.N. and the writer leave the cathedral of Alessandria, granting ten minutes of time to the German general to decide.

"At 14:59, General Hildenbrandt announces that he is willing to sign the surrender, and the formal act is signed at the prefecture, where the Liberation Committee had moved.



"It is signed by President Longo and the undersigned, for the Italian side, and by General Hildenbrandt for the German and republican units he adds (Division "San Marco").

"The moment is really solemn ... The city of Alessandria, with all its services and industrial establishments, is saved by the virtues of the Italians. The C.P.L.N. immediately gives notice to the remaining people and has at the same time that the Hon. Silvio Pivano (designated Prefect of Alessandria) and the undersigned immediately to Valenza to treat for the surrender of the German troops flowing there.

"We start right away and come to Valencia at dusk. There are many units of the "San Marco" with their commander, General Farina. Shortly after we arrived, we headed for the Militarkommandur (in the building of the Middle School and Professional Start-up), despite our role as parliamentarians, and although the "San Marco" Division had already come out in the afternoon; some partisan hotheads of this Unit try to hold their weapons threatenly. We have a small partisan escort and the intervention some of their more responsible officers restore the situation. Negotiations, which are part of the German general of the Jahn Army Corps and the aforementioned General Farina, proceed for long, according to the usual delaying tactics of the enemy, and the discussion is animated until the morning of 29 April. Finally, an agreement is reached, so that all the Nazi-fascist forces in Liguria who are in continuous influx must be blocked, at the point where they are found by a special mixed armistice commission,

"In the late morning of the same day, we resume the laborious negotiations for the conclusion of a final act of unconditional yield. Truncating the loneliness, the Mr. Pivano puts the ultimatum: "Surrender or attack"; towards the 14:00 of April 29 the yield is finally accepted and signed. The original documents are delivered to the C.P.L.N. regularly disarming all enemy units and their subsequent starting to concentration camps occurs. On the evening of 29, the first small allied avant-gardes arrive, who find the whole zone free and enemy units unarmed."

Another official, which is particularly worth mentioning, is the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Umberto Paventi (now captain in service).

On September 8, 1943, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer of the Sub *Argo*, who was in Monfalcone immobilized for major repairs, and he was detached to Pola at the Submariners School. The morning.

of the 8<sup>th</sup> left for Monfalcone to pick up his kit he had left on the submarine. On board the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, he left for Venice on the Sub *Nautilo* (see paragraph 22-ae 22-C) and managed to avoid being captured, reaching in early October Vigliano d'Asti, the country of residence of his family.

With him on the *Nautilo* were also the men of the *Argo* who had come to Venice, who he had worried, would disperse after distributing *Argo's* cash, which he had.

According to a document from the "Piedmont Regional Commission for the Determination of Partisan Qualifications", he - after having first contacted C.L.N. of Turin, and having assumed the nickname of "Argo" in memory of his submarine - he received the following assignments:

- Commander of Valle in Val Sangone, from February 15 to August 1, 1944;
- Commander of the War in the "2nd Langhe", from 1 August to 1 October 1944;
- Chief of Staff of the Division "Campana - Giustizia e Libertà", from 13 March to 8 June 1945.

His activity could not be better summarized than it was in the following information report, drawn up by the Commander of the "Campana" Division, Guido Usseglio:

"The tenente di vascello [Lieutenant] and submariner Umberto Paventi, has a military and warlike past that easily justifies the various and difficult tasks that I have entrusted to him since the beginning of the partisan struggle to date.

"Having joined me in early October 1943, after miraculously escaping the Nazis, he immediately became available to the partisan struggle by dedicating, until February 1944, to the clandestine life of the plot in the city [Turin]. It came to this era sent by the Partisan Authorities to the headquarters of Val Sangone with the difficult task of grouping and coordinating the action of all the small Partigian bands, existing, under a single command of formation and of the valley. This difficult task has been brilliantly accomplished since the ten. vasc. Umberto Paventi and the unit was maintained despite the enemy thrusts and the big raid of May 1944. During an enemy military action, Commander Paventi was wounded and had, therefore, completed the raid, reached a city hospital and then retired to the plain to finish

clandestinely healing. Having resumed contact with my formation, I had to carry a wide organizational activity when, from the valleys, it was necessary to reach the plains for wintering, preparing the transformation of the formation from a Brigade in a Division after having taken part in the final action on Turin, Commander Paventi was a valuable contributor to all the leave operations of the formation.

"In his mission, from time to time delicate and difficult, Commander Paventi has demonstrated: exemplary moral foundations and customs; strong self-discipline which results in a firm, decisive and reasonably strict attitude of command; Easy acquisition of prestige on men; Initiative in military companies and the will to implement them; organizational spirit; reflection, pity and decision in danger; wise cautiousness in the use of men, and absolute insecurity of any risk to remain at the head of them ... "

In the province of Cuneo the two cap. freg. [Commanders] were separated. Giandomenico Bruno and Alberto Villa, also linked by ties of kinship being brothers, in addition to the lieutenant comm. Piero Balbo and lieutenant of port Bernardo Bruno.

The two senior officers were in the armistice destined for both Supermarina. Cap. freg. [Commander] Bruno, however, was in Cortona (Arezzo) shortly allowed for family reasons.

From Cortona he managed to return to Rome at the end of September, to orient himself to the situation, and he had from Adm. Giartosio the Council to return to Cortona, here, in the winter, he devoted himself - after in vain seeking to form a band of patriots - to assist a group of 450 people evacuated into miserable Conditions by the Germans from Cassino, Formia and Gaeta, aided by physician lieutenant Gaetano De Judicibus.

On May 18, 1944, he moved to Savigliano (Cuneo), where he contacted patriotic organizations through [Vice] Admiral Alberto Marengo di Moriondo, who was then clandestine in Turin, and who since June 1944 placed himself under the orders as a simple follower of Maj. Mauri of whom we will tell shortly.

Cap. freg. [Commander] Villa instead stayed in Rome until September 28, assigned from September 13 to the Merchant Marine Office of the Ministry by the order of Adm. Ferreri, subsequently, also by the suggestion of Adm. Giartosio went to his family in Savigliano on October 20, 1943. Here he remained clandestine, without any activity, until at the end of May 1944 to

a notice by the Turin Command of the republican pseudo- navy declined in writing to join and contact with the elements of C.V.L. of Savigliano, among which - of course - the brother-in-law and of equal rank (senior to than him) Giandomenico Bruno.

After refusing to join the socialist republic at the same time as Villa, he referred to the Maj. Mauri (whose real name was Enrico Martini), who then commanded the autonomous military formation, called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the Langhe (vast hilly area between Bormida and Tanaro), and was instructed to form an operational organ of concentration of the military scattered in Area, without however being able to succeed. It is said, by the way, that Mauri's formation ended up becoming a grouping of patriotic military divisions.

At the same time as the attempts to establish this operational center in the Cuneo area with a real military character, Bruno assumed command of the detachment of Savigliano of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Garibaldi "Nannetti", dependent on the 1<sup>st</sup> Division "Garibaldi - Cuneo". Detachment under his impulse increased in importance and cap. freg. [Commander] Bruno in September 1944 was appointed deputy commander of the "Nannetti" Brigade; In December he was entrusted with the command of the newly formed "E. Carando" Brigade: he exercised it by the battle name of "Tom" under the dependency of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division "Garibaldi-Cuneo".

The Brigade, under its leadership, was distinguished by sabotage of enemy transport, disarmament of the 40<sup>th</sup> Black Brigade headquartered in Savigliano, search of arms and numerous fights with dead and injured on both sides.

Among his direct collaborators he had, during the command of the detachment of Savigliano and during that of the Carando Brigade, cap. freg. [Commander] Villa (nickname "Max") with the post of senior officer (with functions comparable to those of chief of staff).

In his report, cap. freg. [Commander] Bruno, recalling the collaboration of Villa and his other two employees and fellow fighters (Army Major Giulio Baroeris, Brigadier Deputy Commander, and Cavalry Captain Dino Morelli of Popolo) wrote:

"Their passionate and enthusiastic work was superior to every praise. In the conspiratorial phase of the plain work the incidents were many: some of our men were captured and shot by the same, after being raked up the first time by the Germans,

He was subsequently arrested by the Black Brigades, of the Monterosa (Republican Division) and again by the Germans. The longest of my stay in prison was 19 days.

“In the insurrectional phase, the Carigrad Brigade had the task of liberating Savigliano, a task which he overcame in fierce clashes with the provincial black forces and against the retreated German division. The Brigade believes in the very high sacrifice spirit from which the patriots were animated, and even more so if we realize that our arms was very limited in automatic weaponry, also because no launch was ever made to our benefit (1). Our weapons came from painstaking searches and materials torn from the enemy.

“Finally, at the dawn of April 30, Savigliano could be freed and our activity turned into immediate and public order tasks, only a week after the first allied unit took over our military powers in the area. Crops, livestock, industrial plants, civil buildings, almost intact. Immediately the demobilization of the Partisan forces began,

Also cap. freg. [Commander] Villa suffered a brief imprisonment in April 1945, being released in the aftermath of the events. Liberated Savigliano, while Bruno assumed responsibility for public order and garrison duties in the local C.L.N. (As he mentioned in the report now quoted), Cmdr. Villa was entrusted with the post of Commander of the town of Savigliano, who was responsible until the end of the year, until May 15, 1945.

The ten comm. Piero Balbo, captured by the Germans in Pola on September 11, 1943, along with other CREM School Officers, managed to escape and to reach - after having stayed a week in Pola - Cossano Belbo (40 km, as the crow fly's, to the east of Savigliano, in the province of Cuneo) where his family lived and where he arrived on September 22.

The cousin Adriano Balbo, who had already collected automatic weapons and SMGs, immediately organized the first group of patriots of the Belbo Valley, numbering in December 1943 to the consignment of 200 armed. With this group supported in the same

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(1) Frigate Captain [Commander] Bruno refers to the fact that he has never received any of those weapons and ammunition supplied launched by parachutes by the Allies in various areas of occupied Italy.

month of December the first victorious clash with German forces at Loazzolo di Vesime (3 km, by air, to the east of Cossano, province of Asti). Until the end of February 1944, the group supported another two clashes and had the disarmament of 11 carabinieri [police] barracks at its disposal.

On 5 and 6 March 1944, as the Germans occupied with enormous forces equipped with armored vehicles, the Belbo Valley and having destroyed the urban and rural properties owned by the Balbo family in retaliation against the valiant Cmdr. ten. [Lieutenant] Piero Balbo, he moved his group - which in the meantime became more numerous and more aggressive - toward Mombarcaro in the Langhe.

Here the group continued to stand by the end of April 1944, when the ten. [Lieutenant] Balbo came into contact with the Maj. Mauri, remaining in his dependence for the rest of the war, first as Commander of Brigade, then Division (2<sup>nd</sup> Division "Langhe") and lastly a group of Divisions.

In the latter formation, the Unit led by Balbo included:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Division "Giovanni Balbo" (in the Valle Belbo and Tanaro area), commanded by the guardiamarina [Midshipman] Ercole Varese;
- the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division "Fumagalli" (in the area of the Bormida, Spigno and Uzzione valleys to Savona), commanded by the sottotenente vasc. [Ensign] Bacchetta;
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division "Rocca d'Arazzo" (in the Rocca d'Arazzo area - Montegrosso - Grana - Casorzo, all Arstigiano), commanded by the Lieutenant of the Aeronautica Luigi Novello.

It was a total of 3300 men.

Three allied missions (two English and one Polish) followed the Group's activities, coordinating with that of the principal front and supplying weapons, which came in 9 shots by means of air launches. Balbo also benefited the connection he could establish with the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Augusto Migliorini acting in Liguria, in the Savona area (see next paragraph).

The 1<sup>st</sup> Division had taken the name of "Giovanni Balbo", in memory of the father of ten. [Lieutenant] Balbo who, with the name Pinin, had wanted to enroll in his son's orders. The valiant and vigorous parent, who was severely wounded in November 1944 in a battle at Canelli (south of Asti), as soon as he recovered he returned to the line, leaving his life on February 24, 1945 in another fight at Valdivilla (fraction of Santo Stefano Belbo, just north of Cossano Belbo).

The Group distinguished itself in numerous feats of arms and effectively contributed to the liberation of the vast area of its jurisdiction.

Finally, it should be remembered that the formations later commanded by Balbo, from the initial group of 200 men to Group of Divisions, had a strictly military structure and character without any political nuances and that Balbo always dressed in the uniform of the Navy. The battle name, assigned to him by Maj. Mauri, was that of "Poli".

Port Lieutenant Bernardo Bruno was at the date of the Armistice in Cuneo, with his family, waiting for his destination. The city occupied on September 10 by the German S.S., he immediately went to the mountains where he began without doubt the patriot activity - under the pseudonym of "Dino" - continuing it uninterruptedly until June 26, 1945, the date of the end of the demobilization of the formation he was part of. He tried to maintain contacts with those who belonged to the Navy fought in Lower Piedmont as patriots, including especially with cap. freg. [Commander] Bruno and the Lieutenant comm. Balbo.

In the 21 months of continuous struggle, he had the following successive assignments of increasing importance: participation in the organization of the "Damiani Group" and the "Group of Armed bands" of Val Maira, and then the officer of the latter Group (from September 1943 to April 10, 1944); Commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> "Castellar" band (April 11 to June 20, 1944) and deputy commander of the Val Maira (from June 21, 1944 to February 20, 1945); Interim commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alpine Division "Justice and Freedom" (3 January to 27 February 1945); Chief of Staff of the same Division (comprising the Brigades of Val Maira, Val Varaita and Saluzzo, with a total force of approximately 1300 men) by the end of February 1945 until the demobilization of the patriots.

He had the opportunity to give assistance and protection and to move to numerous secure military sites of various nationalities (British, American, French, Russian, Polish, Austrian) escaped from the German concentration camps.

He distinguished himself by courage and command of thirteen major warfare operations against the Nazi-fascists,

He disdained to respond to appeals and Nazi-fascist gangs, even when threatening the death penalty. "In particular, he writes, during October, 1943, I categorically refused to join a constitution of the military command of Piedmont and Liguria, offered to me by a group of senior officers of the dissolved

R. Army, with promises of immediate promotion and fabulous emoluments and allowances."

Another officer, to be mentioned, is cap. freg. [Commander] Giuseppe Gregorio, who - after having landed in Genoa, his DD *Corazziere*, who was in great works, and had paid off and assisted his staff - came to his house in Mondovì. Here he came into contact with the Clandestine Front and C.L.N., until March 1944 he worked on the dependence of the Alpine Colonel Augusro Reteuna, who was the commander of the IV provincial military district allied to Cuneo. He thus faced serious risks - which also led to his imprisonment for a few days in December 1944, upon the denunciation of a traitor, by the organization of armed groups operating in Mondovì and the collection of supplies to be sent to the patriots operating in neighboring mountainous areas. He also tried to put in a civic guard, formed by the republican authorities of Mondovì, sure patriotic elements in order to rule the situation at the time of insurrection and liberation.

#### 61<sup>st</sup> IN LIGURIA.

Let us recall the Captain of C.R.E.M. of nautical services Renato Mazzolani, decorated with gold medal for memory.

To the armistice he was the greatest aide in the Muggiano barracks, where the staff of ships in La Spezia was housed.

After German units occupied the barracks, he reached his home and immediately became the clandestine front of the Navy of La Spezia, gathering officers, non-officers and sailors around him.

He became a member of C.L.N. of La Spezia and commander of the S.A.P Group. (Justice and Freedom) of the Spiš region.

On December 20, 1944, he was arrested by a black brigade unit and confined in the prisons of Migliarina. He was subjected to torture which re-opened wounds received on the cruiser *Pola* during the operation ended with the surprise of Cape Matapan, to extort him confessions about the organization he was an active member and the names of his members. On February 20, 1945, after two months of Stoic



enduring, fearing he could not stand for longer, killed himself by hanging himself in the cell where he had been segregated.

His voluntary death was considered - given the noblest reason that led him to take away his life - as an act of heroism carried out in time of war.

And let's talk about ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Augusto Migliorini.

He was the Chief of the Operations Office of the Navy Command of Genoa on September 8, 1943. On 9 September Adm. Pinna left him free, and he went to Finale Ligure (Savona) where he had family.

He immediately came into contact with the exponents of the liberation movement of Liguria and set out to organize sabotage and to form armed bands; In order to have greater freedom of movement and to remove all suspicions, he appeared at the Naval Command of Savona in February 1944, where he signed the promise to swear loyalty to the socialist republic in the case of recall under the arms, well regarded then from complying with the duties arising from the act signed by him.

In March 1944 he assumed the direction of S.I.C. for Liguria, on the designation of Adm. Maugeri gave him the instructions by means of two officers of the S.LC, ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Luigi Tomasuolo and cap. g.n. [Captain of Engineers] Dario Paglia, had departed after September 8, 1943 to the Navy's S.I.S. (Secret Information Service) with a particularly busy war past.

The first, recovered at sea by a English DD after the sinking of the ship on which he was boarded as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fire Director, escaped from the concentration camp in Egypt and after more than 6 months of miraculous adventures in Egypt, Palestine and Syria had returned to Italy in good time to provide Information of great interest for the forcing of Port of Alexandria (action of Sub. *Scirè*).

The second was embarked from the beginning of the war onwards, on the Submarines as Chief Service Engineers and had previously participated in numerous military missions in the Mediterranean and then in the Atlantic, earning six decorations for the Military Valor.

After the Armistice they both fled to Rome and came into contact with the Adm. Maugeri, (Captain of the clandestine S.I.S.) and had effectively collaborated, working together in pairs, to create an information network in a busy territory.

Since S.I.S. considered it necessary to have an information center in Liguria, not far from the French border, T.V. [Lieutenant] Tomasuolo and Cap. G.N. [Captain of Engineers] Paglia came to Finale Ligure in search of T.V. [Lieutenant] Migliorini. The choice had fallen on this Officer, both for his brilliant past of war and because of information previously collected in Genoa, it turned out to be a person willing to accept a task of considerable importance, which however posed serious risks.

In fact, the German - republican counter-espionage was very active and kept its eyes open in Liguria: it is true that despite the absolute secrecy with which the Tomasuolo/Paglia meetings with Migliorini had occurred, after a few weeks of his new activity, T.V. [Lieutenant] Migliorini was arrested by the Italian SS, who after a threatening treatment released him without being able to collect evidence.

He organized, according to the directives received, a network of informants whose sections were headed by a clandestine officer or sub-officer living in Liguria: in his report, Migliorini mentions cap. vasc. [Captain] Giovanni Marabotto, cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Silvio Cavo (formally commander of the TB *Ardito* - See paragraph 12-a), the ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Iginio Fetta, cap. D. M. [Captain of Engineers] Natale Bossolino, sottotenente [Ensign] of the port Francesco Cartia, Chief 2<sup>nd</sup> class Briano and carpenter sergeant Percivalli.

A radio station, which had been promised him for the rapid transmission of information, could never have arrived. Therefore, the transmission had to take place without being able to rely on the correspondence - through the same information, which had to move and report the news personally. In general, they had to go to Milan, where they had an order to report it to the Quarter Master

General of C.V.L. (Gen. Cadorna): the same Migliorini went five or six times to Milan.

Given the slowness and difficulty of connecting with Milan, most of the news missed the prestige of timeliness, and Migliorini thought then to devote himself mainly to educate politicians, to the activity of the patriotic bands.

In August 1944 he came into contact with Maj. Mauri, who named him his representative in Liguria with the faculty of dealing with all military and political issues.

He carried out his new activity among the difficulties and risks of each kind. He was arrested three times in the Ligurian Alps: the first time by the black brigades, but he escaped; a second time from the Germans, but filing fake identity documents could be released; the third time, put by the Germans against a street lamp to be shot, was saved by a provisional intervention of a unit of patriots.

Meanwhile, in August 1944, duly authorized by Major Mauri, he had contacted Gen. Farina Commander of the "San Marco" Division (which has already been mentioned). Here's how ten. vasc. [Lieutenant] Migliorini speak of these contacts:

"Gen. Farina offered me to enter the "San Marco" with whatever rank I wanted. I proposed to him to go with the whole Division into the liberation struggle.

"Although I knew exactly my position (I showed him the documents that allowed me to deal with him), he always behaved very well with me and I admit that I owe my life to him. Among other things, taken once by a counter band "San Marco" Ligure (Savona) Chalice, I had to be eliminated and I got away only for his timely intervention.

"Despite being against fascism, Gen. Farina justified membership of the socialist republic by the fact that it considered his duty as a soldier to fight with the Germans until the end in a fight without any way-out ...

"I've tightened my relationship with the gen. Farina, when at the end of 1944 I joined the British military mission for, the west coast of Liguria. I had in fact combined an interview between the Head of Mission Captain Bell and to Gen. Farina, despite the strict German control over the general; But Captain Bell unfortunately got caught in a raid.

"A few months before the end, I brought the General on behalf of the Allies the conditions under which he was to submit. Accepting such conditions, I had him through Colonel Rossi (Chief of General Staff General

Farina) plans for fortifications, mines, troop deployments, etc. I had him dissolve the counter band of Calice (which was a collection of delinquents). I have forbidden him to shoot and I have released hundreds of patriots taken with weapons. The most important result was that mined works [ready to be blown] existing in the San Marco Division area were almost intact ... "

The British Mission, whose dependence Mighorini had passed in late 1944, consisted of an British officer and two radio-telegraphists, an American officer and an sub-officer, of four Italian officers, of whom Migliorini was the highest ranking. With Capt. Bell captured, Maj. Johnston became the head of Mission.

Tasks of the Mission orders Migliorini: Coordinate and intensify information services, make links between members of the mission, sabotage, implement the link with the C.L.N. of Savona, where Migliorini represented the Mission.

On March 12, 1945, returning from a meeting with Maj. Johnston, Migliorini fell for the fifth time into the hands of the Germans together with another member of the Mission, Piero Mauro of Mondovi. He managed to escape again, while Mauro was miraculously rescued by a collaborator of the Mission, of the best-known to the name of G.N. Galasso from Finalmarina,

On the day before the release, the Mission, bringing together its members who generally worked at different points, moved to Savona for better political and military control of the second Ligurian zone (that of the West) pending the arrival of Allied forces.

Among his direct collaborators, Migliorini particularly recalls ten. [Lieutenant] Cartia, who was long in prison, risked being shot and released after resuming his business. Finally, he remembers that among his collaborators there were 5 gunmen and 1 girl sentenced to 24 years in jail. The Allied Mission had one captured and three wounded.

## 62<sup>nd</sup> IN LOMBARDY.

In this region, Naval personnel worked mainly with information activities, connecting with S.I.C.

The main protagonists of this activity were Col. a.n. [Naval Weapons] Giuseppe Rizzani and cap. freg. [Commander] Giovanni Dessy, as well as Lt. Col. of the

g.n. [Naval Engineer] Luigi Pavia. Speaking of them we will have the opportunity to quote other patriots of the Navy.

Commander Dessy was at the armistice on the *Gorizia* in major repairs in the Arsenal of La Spezia and also had the responsibility of the *Bolzano*, also in repair.

In the first twenty-four hours of the armistice, he managed to keep order and discipline on board the ship, the evening of 9 September - after an order of the Department's Command - he sent to groups of 100 well-led men who were dependent on the barracks of St. Bartholomew, where they were then left free.

On September 10, after doing so. A last visit to the now deserted and plundered ships. By the Germans and locals, left La Spezia with the permission of Admiral Maraghini and reached – not without difficulty - his family in Piedmont, carrying with him the flag of the *Gorizia*.

Moving to Milan, seeking employment, he was hired in January. 1944 by Col. a.n. [Naval Weapons] Giuseppe Rizzani in the Office. U.R.I. (Office of Industrial Representatives) he founded, both a livelihood and to be able to at the same time collecting and transmitting to S.I.C. information on Nazi-style productive activity.

Col. Rizzani writes: "With a generous and enthusiastic spirit, Dessy, as soon as I thought I could talk to him about the true activity of the Office, he spontaneously took on the most daring initiatives, even to cover my person on whom they thickened too many suspicions, especially by republican authorities."

The work carried out by cap. freg. [Commander] Dessy is described in the report to the proposal for the award of the silver medal for the military valor:

"In Milan, shortly after his arrival, he started an active organization to create an information network that provided excellent services in the political, military and industrial fields.

"Contact with the S.I.S. Center of Berna and with the O.S.S. (Operational Secret Service) of Lugano, headed these two services to support the groups of partisans with whom they were already in contact.

That said then his recruitment to the U.R.I. the report goes on:

"In September 1944, as the head of the U.R.I. was subjected to close surveillance as suspected by Nazi-fascists [and disbanded the U.R.I.], Commander Dessy assumed personality [for the office of Col. Rizzani] the direction of the S.I.C. in Upper Italy, so assuring

the continuity and operation of such a very important service [while Rizzani continued to be a simple informer and to support the officers and agents who were trading with Switzerland].

"Towards the end of 1944, I came into contact with elements of the S.I.C. of Rome performed efficient work [in the areas of Arona, Milan, Valtellina] between the various groups of partisans belonging to the "Volante Azzurra" Brigades, "Fiamme Verdi" and "Rocco" and to some partisan formations of Valsassina supplied them with topographic maps, money and war material,

"In order to better carry out his task of informing, he also contacted at considerable risk even with fascist and Nazi personalities [amongst whom Commander Thun of German S.S.], from which he gained valuable political, industrial and military information, inducing some of these personalities to collaborate.

"He largely managed the operations for the liberation of Como, facilitating the arrival of troops of the US 5<sup>th</sup> Army throughout the area, [more important than Lombardy, because the fascist high hierarch and the Black Brigades fled to the border. He also treated for the surrender of large German and Italian units, and sent by the National Liberation Committee of Como to deal with Mussolini's surrender, assuming in C.L.N. a significant usefulness for the Navy. "

It is interesting to note in this regard that Dessy could not conclude the negotiations for Mussolini's surrender, because by supporting "Colonel Valerio" for that purpose, he arrested him by throwing him into jail for a few hours, despite the credentials of the C.L.N. and of the American Consul of Lugano of which Dessy was provided.

Among the members of the Military Navy who collaborated with U.R.I. or with Commander Dessy, we remind you of some of the ones we found in the documentation and who have had the opportunity to act:

Retired Admiral Giulio Zino, living in Milan. He wrote in his report to Adm. Giroi, speaking of his many moves in Milan: "In Milan I managed to get in touch with elements of the resistance front for the sole merit of the Adm. Zino, who has always hosted me. How much good and noble this admiral did, whose goodness is traditional and known to everyone in the Navy, is not easy to say. Active antifascist element and

anti-German, a lover of the Navy and his men, helped all those who addressed him: his home was the center of all the persecuted of the resistance front. With him and with the contacts he had had the concentration of all non-adherent naval personnel in the area, for the insurrectional phase. Of course his business was going through considerable difficulties and it was closely guarded. Funds raised by him were paid to the Resistance Committees, as well as material aids. All of course we were very vigilant, and he with a lot of friends were imprisoned by the fascists or the Germans ... By request of Adm. Zino picked up all the possible military news, which was then to be communicated to Commander Dessy for broadcast ... On March 11, 1945 I had an acquaintance in Acqui from an informer that Adm. Zino and many of the common friends had been arrested”.

The not far away liberation avoided that against Adm. Zino and his friends, the Nazi Fascists, made time to precede with their war tribunals. Adm. Zino, for his praiseworthy conduct was - as a war ended - considered active in service throughout the period between 1 October 1943 and the end of the conflict.

The ten. col. g.n. [Lt. Colonel of Naval Engineers] Giuseppe Pavia, head of a group of informational patriots whom he organized; The cap. freg. [Commander] Luigi Donini, who worked as an temporary at the National Insurance Institute, collaborated together with the cap. freg. [Commander] Peppino Manca and with cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Mario Carlotti for the information service of the organization "Nemo"; cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Silvio Montani, who contacted Dessy with C.L.N. of Brescia together with sottoten. vasc. c. [Acting Ensign] Luigi Guidi, sent materials to patriots by taking them from various industries with counterfeit travel documents; The sottoten. vasc. [Ensign] Bruno Ragazzi and the sottoten. del g.n. [Ensign of Naval Engineers] Emilio Cambiaggi, who collaborated with Dessy, with Pavia and the maj. a.n. [Major of Naval Arms] Angiolino Ferrari (a close collaborator of Rizzani in the U.R.I.) to collect information and plant an underground radio station in the suburbs of Milan to communicate with Berna (where it was a S.I.S. Center, headed by cap. vasc. [Captain] Alfonso Galleans), relying on the work of the sottoten. r.t. [Ensign of Radio] of C.R.E.M. Giuseppe Cannito; The sottotenente vasc. [Ensign] Pietro Baragiola, who after organizing a cell of the C.L.N. in the arsenal of La Spezia for sabotaging purposes, he contacted Dessy, worked for the O.S.S., escaped arrest by the Germans at the end of January 1945 by withdrawing into Switzerland

he returned to Italy in mid-March and worked under Dessy's dependence until the liberation of Milan.

Other patriots (the Navy that we can remember, all connected with the U.R.I. or with the O.S.S. or the S.L.C., are the ten. vasc. r. [Naval Lieutenant (ret)] Fernando Pollastrello, the ten. vasc. [Naval Lieutenant] Ernesto Balbo Bertone of Sambuy, col. a.n. [Colonel of Naval Arms] Amleto Ciaccia, cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Antonio Chirri, the radiotelegraphist Maitan.

### 63<sup>rd</sup> IN THE VENETO

Of all the patriots of the Navy who fought in the Veneto, two must be remembered in particular: cap. freg. [Commander] Jerzy Sas Kulczycki and cap. freg. [Commander] Gianroberto Burgos.

The first was undoubtedly the most conspicuous sailor patriot, who from the Veneto extended his activity to all northern Italy; the latter was active in the Carnic Alps.

Sas Kulczycki, a valiant sea fighter - twice decorated - from the outset of hostilities until September 8, 1943, was surprised by the armistice on board the BB *Cavour* in great works at the Trieste shipyards.

After agreeing with the Navy Command of Trieste at the outbreak of his crew (see paragraph 22-c), he left Trieste with some of his comrades, first moving to Sacile and then to the mountains. Here we were told to organize the first band of patriots. The German raids forced him to a skirmish; He often traveled to Treviso, "then in October at Montebelluna, on November 20, 1943 in Venice, always aiming to create the voluntary military organization of the Veneto. On 22 December 1943, for the arrest of his collaborators, he was forced to interrupt his animating work abruptly moved to Milan, now actively sought after and bounty of half a million lire, then raised to one million (today about 40 million).

From Milan, he was named by a message sent by the r.t. station of Bari, the only representative of the Allied and Italian Supreme Command for the military organization of the patriots in occupied Italy.

He had relations with the main exponents of the various movements, including Prof. Ferruccio Parri, and abstaining from affiliation with the political groups created the Italian Voluntary Army (V.A.I.) he conceived and wanted as a single block of all patriotic forces



which is exclusively military and therefore apolitical. For his work and for the great prestige he achieved, the Supreme Command appointed him Chief of Staff of V.A.I.

He created the Delegations of Veneto, Emilia, Piedmont and Liguria, as emanations of the central organization in Lombardy. The components of the V.A.I. carried out extensive information service for the Allied Armies in these regions, established armed units by supplying them with ammunition and food supplies, actively engaged in guerrilla warfare, and sabotage acts against Command Headquarters, Military Facilities, and German Moving Columns.

In early March 1944 the V.A.I. already had an organized force of about 9,000 armed men.

Commander Sas Kulczycki was also an animator of a fledgling civilian organization, included in V.A.I. on the basis of an article of its statute (approved in Genoa in early 1944), which envisaged the use of all the members for the nation's civil reconstruction work.

In March 1944 the arrests of his collaborators were intensified in Genoa. The increased dangers did not disarm him, but instead pushed him to intensify his activity, promptly replacing the arrested with other volunteers, directing numerous meetings at different points in the city, preparing the sabotage plan for the city and its railway facilities; At the beginning of June 1944 the formations he had reorganized had to be ready to enter into action.

On March 31st, a new raid made by Germans S.S. arrested his other collaborators in Genoa, while the leading members of V.A.I. Milanese fell into German hands. On April 15, 1944, he was arrested in Genoa. His work was not interrupted. In fact, after his arrest, the Voluntary Corps of Liberation (or Freedom) at whose head the Supreme Command issued in November 1944 Gen. Raffaele Cadorna, who had previously collaborated with him when he was appointed a military consultant in June 1944 under C.L.N.A.I. (See paragraph 54 - year 1944).

Immediately transferred to the prison of San Vittore in Milan, he kept his faith in the fate of the country during his imprisonment, continuing with his skillfully fervent patriot work for the joint unification of all Italians. Moved to Fossoli (Carpi's village) along with many comrades, July 14, 1944 was shot. His attitude towards the platoon of execution

was considered sublime; His gold medal was decreed to his memory.

Cap. freg. Burgos found himself in the convalescent license at Mione di Ovaro in Carnia: some shards from his right leg had been extracted, penetrating the wounded in August 17, 1942 when he was commander of the DD *Gioberti*. Declared cured towards the end of August 1943, was waiting to receive a service destination.

From the radio, the news of the armistice immediately had the idea of moving to the south to reach the ships: he had planned, together with others, to embark at Ancona on makeshift means but could not complete his project.

He remained in Carnia, then he became a deputy director of a company dedicated to the wood industry, to justify his presence in Ovaro.

In January 1944, he was briefed in Venice about the general situation in which Carnia received fragmentary news: knowing that if he had been introduced to the Republican Navy Command, he would be invited to join, he returned to Ovaro.

Meanwhile in Carnia were the first formations of patriots who, assembled under a single command, formed one of the Garibaldi Brigades. At the same time, that is, between the end of April and the beginning of May 1944, the C.L.N. of the Gorto Valley, with representatives of the various parties: Commander Burgos was among the promoters, entering the C.L.N. as a representative of the liberal party. Other C.L.N. formed in other Valleys, until in July they were merged into C.L.N. Carnico formed by the heads of the C.L.N. of the various Valleys. The C.L.N. represented, as in every region, the clandestine civil authority, while the "Garibaldi" Command in Carnia was the military authority.

The German garrisons scattered in the valleys exerted their arrogance with raids, destruction of dwellings, and shooting people. In order to better deal with the dramatic situation, another organization of patriots emerged, from the initial force of a battalion to that of a Brigade and ultimately to a division called "Osoppo - Carnia" with an apolitical "alpine", While "Garibaldi" was clearly communist, as is well known, The members of the "Osoppo" were wearing a green handkerchief (color of the flame

of the Alpines), while those of the "Garibaldi" carried a red handkerchief. Commander Burgos immediately made available to the "Osoppo", but his leaders preferred that he continue his activities as a member of the C.L.N.

In September 1944, the Germans carried out a vast sweeping-up in Carnia, as a retaliation against the formations of the patriots; They employed two divisions of Cossack anti-Bolshevik and strong S.S. unit, which then remained to preside over the Carnia area. The patriots were forced to disperse, assisted with information and supplies from Burgos, and the C.L.N. had to dissolve temporarily.

Burgos, who was also hiding in the mountains, had the "Osoppo Brigade" - the task of organizing in the valley bottom the so-called "territorial populace", with the task of recruiting elements that were ready to take up arms, As soon as these had been provided to them, and to supply the "Operation Osoppo" acting on the mountains.

At first he was named Chief of the Val di Gorto (battalion commander) and then commander of the Brigade with territorial jurisdiction over the whole Carnia (six valleys). Being able to release the Germans and Cossacks from the authorize free circulation, as chief of the Italian Coal Company and Deputy Director of the Wood Industry Company, he could carry out his illegal task in relative security by issuing the relevant provisions to the Valle leaders under the pseudonym of "Flavio" (while the Commander of the Operation was called "Paolo"). In April 1945, with his tenaciously well-disguised work, he had succeeded in framing "Osoppo" (now constituting a solid formation resulting from the merger of the operating Territorial, commanded by the duo "Flavio-Paolo") a few thousand well-organized men, ready to attack the Germans and the Cossacks to drive them beyond the borders.

Meanwhile, Commander Burgos had been in contact, since July 1944, with the American Major Lloyd Smith, who with some radio operators had parachuting into Carnia and communicating information with an implanted radio around Ovaro. Burgos had lost sight of Maj. Smith, when on December 16, 1944, saw him come to Mione with eight other allied soldiers, among them the English Captain Prier: they were all ragged and hungry, having rambled here and there hunted down by the Germans. With the help of Burgos and a unit of the "Osoppo", they succeeded - after clothed, rested and

refocused - to go to Yugoslavia, from where they reached free Italy sending by radio thanks and greetings to their saviors.

On December 26, Commander Burgos was arrested by the Cossacks, who searched and looted his home with harsh behavior towards his family: after long interrogations he was inexplicably released.

In the final phase of the war, "some Georgian officers [of the Cossack units], seeing that Germany was about to be defeated, - wrote Commander Burgos, - they tried to save themselves and their men by going to our side. After long conversations, I was able not only to convince them that the Allies would not deliver them to the Red Army [advancing through Austria] but that if they had gone to our orders they could have hoped for a favorable treatment by the Anglo - Americans. The Georgian troops, in fact, fought at our side, and a special report on their behavior was delivered to us by the British Command. While I was secretly taking arrangements with the Georgian unit commander, a spy went to report to the S.S. that the commander of "Osoppo" was in the area and of course I was stopped as a suspected person, but fortunately I managed to escape. When the S.S. then also surrendered, their commander told me that he had already decided to terminate me by being convinced that I was the wanted person".

The news of the signature of the armistice in Italy came to Carnia by radio on May 2, 1945. The commanders "Flavio" and "Paul" immediately made a written statement to the commander of the S.S. and the hetman of the Cossacks, but the first did not want to recognize the validity of the armistice, and the second claimed that it would only deliver the weapons to the Anglo - Americans.

These were advancing, and Commander Burgos after busy events (including a second three-day detention, without drinking and eating by the SS, while trying to reach the British lines to provide information on the situation in Carnia and suggest the most appropriate mode of advance and occupation of the region) managed to return to the headquarters of the "Osoppo" Command, of which he was always one of the leaders, and to direct the attack of his patriots against the rearguard of German and Cossacks enemies fleeing to Austria.

Just as the advance guard of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army entered Tolmezzo, he was appointed liaison officer between the patriots and the English Command, and did useful work for the peaceful occupation of Carnia.

and for the assistance of the population exasperated by privations and anguishes.

A great aid given in the Veneto to the guerrilla warfare is the sub-chief radioman Dario Leli, a young man of great capacity and initiative. Parachuted in July 1944 in that region, managed to organize a vast information network in favor of the formations of the patriots and to establish and maintain the connections with the radio station commissioned by him.

#### 64° IN EMILIA

One of the most active officers was the ten. col. g.n. [Lt. Colonel of Naval Engineers] Gottardo Bottarelli, who was on September 8, under license for convalescence for illness due to the war at a hotel in Lama Mocogno (Modena), on the slopes of the Modena Apennines.

He immediately took the decision to fight behind the lines against the nazifascist, unable to reach the naval bases of the South. He began collecting weapons and ammunition hidden by soldiers passing by, assisted by Mr. Giulio Gamberini son of the owner of the hotel where he was staying.

Back on September 12, at Rubiera (approximately equidistant from Reggio Emilia and Modena, on the railway line), his usual residence, was among the initiators of the anti-Fascist movement holding in his home the first meeting of the constituting C.L.N. Local, 17 September 1943, and intensifying it in connection with C.L.N. of Reggio and Modena collecting weapons and propaganda for the recruitment of patriots.

After a week of staying in Rome, either to hire news on a hopeful soon liberation of the Capital and to escape the vigilance he was immediately moved to Rubiera for its openly anti-fascist attitude he assumed after the 25<sup>th</sup> July, returned to Rubiera in mid October 1943.

After a new absence in December from Rubiera, spent with relatives in Chiavari to escape a certain capture, he returned in early January of 1944 and resumed his clandestine activity extending it with skill and lack of care in March 1944 to the Military information service, for the commission received by Count Carlo Calvi and Col. A.N. Bruno Riva, active members of C.L.N. of Reggio.

Desperate to take-up arms, he attempted to reach the Pellice Valley, but was stopped at Pinerolo on March 15 by a squad of the "Muti" legion who was in Piedmont to carry out a rampage. He barely managed to get released, and returned to Rubiera.

With the consent of C.L.N. went to Milan with the second chief quartermaster S. Armando Ferrari (also a member of the CLN) to appear at a call from that technical office of the Salò Navy and to sign - if he considered it useful - the act of adherence In order to gain greater clandestine freedom of action. In fact, he and the second chief signed, after much hesitation, and returned to Rubiera, where they did not comply with any notice of presentation and oath performance.

Bottarelli assumed the command of the S.A.P. of the sector, and was supplying the formations of patriots operating in the mountains, and, with risky operations, necessary to the Nazi-fascists entry. Preceded on August 7 by TODT (German Labor Organization for Military Purposes), it was fired after eight days for bad performance, but could collect precious data on the organization and activity of the TODT, which allowed him to kick it off with a surprise attack the administrative office and capture staff.

Again sought after, it had to ram around here and there, without interrupting his activity as commander of the S.A.P., until at the end of January 1945, in the face of the threats of the republican national guard, he went in hiding in the mountains where he contacted col. A.N. Bruno Riva. He escaped a rampage, enlisted in the first "Green Flames" Brigade, which he was appointed head of general services. At the head of a group of "Green Flames", 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1945, after a fierce battle, a German unit departed from a dominant position, then pursuing them in flight along with an allied battalion.

The fight ran to its conclusion. On 18 April, Bottarelli formed, taking over command, saboteurs detachment "Santa Barbara", where he first fled to the plain, where, from 21 to 25 April (days of the liberation of the Modena - Reggio area), the detachment - led by him - distinguished itself in actions of disturbance and attack on retreating German troops.

After the liberation, the Reggio Emilia Directorate of the Christian Democracy, who had supported the "Green Flames" Brigade, entrusted him with the office of vice superintendent for the province of Reggio

Emilia and that of prefect Commissioner for the Blue Ribbon Institute.

The Col. A.N. Bruno Riva - who was mentioned - was at the armistice the head of the Directorate of underwater arms of La Spezia. The stronghold occupied by the Germans, he retired to La Spezia until mid-October to help and try to settle the thousands of workers of his department, he went to Milan, refusing any collaboration with the Nazis. From Milan, where he had not found a job, he had reached his father's home in Scandiano (Reggio Emilia) and here in March 1944 he had joined the C.L.N. of Reggio Emilia with the *nom de guerre* "Arra", making his home a center of the network of patriotic connections. The main task entrusted to him was the gathering of military information; He took to it so brilliantly amidst not a few difficulties and considerable risks. When Count Carlo Calvi was arrested on 2 December 1944, a member of C.L.N. he worked with self-denial to get his liberation and continued to carry out his task with increasing delicacy among the imperviousness of Nazi ferocity.

#### 65<sup>th</sup> IN TUSCANY.

An officer who distinguished himself in information activity without being part of the S.L.C. and in other activities supporting the "V" Brigade (commanded by Patriot Vittorio Sorani) was cap. freg. [Commander] Max Ponza.

He was, at the armistice, commander in 2<sup>nd</sup> of the *Cadorna*, but on September 8 he was briefly on liberty in Florence and could not reach the ship that was in Taranto and left 9 for Malta. He reached Rome on September 19 and contacted with Col. Cordero di Montezemolo, to whom he delivered a first list of deployed soldiers in the first "V" groups (with whom he was collaborating since 12 September) and asked for instructions for the operation of a military information service, which he had already placed the basics. He organized clandestine radio and at the end of October 1943 passed the lines, fording the Volturno between Isernia and Venafro. Presented - according to the instructions of Col. Cordero - to Minister de Courten, to Gen. Taddeo Orlando (Minister of War) and to Maresciallo Badoglio, informed them of the constitution of the "V" Brigade and its operational and information purposes. He was put in charge of the S.I.S. reconstitution

and subsequently commanded by the Allied Information Services, which incorporated it into a special unit of the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army, which followed the fortunes until the liberation of Rome. Meanwhile, by order of Gen. Orlando, had organized a band of special liaison officers with the "V" Brigade,

Meanwhile, the commander Ponzio's villa, located at Castello near Florence, had become the seat of the Command "V", and a deposit of weapons and ammunition had been set up in the villa's estate.

On the morning of June 1944 (not specified in the documents found) after the liberation of Rome, Command "V" received from Ponto a message that he informed that he had passed the lines (which were still in the south of Florence) and at one o'clock one of the following night he would try to cross the Arno by evading German vigilance. At 01.30, Commander Ponzio signaled his presence on the left bank of the Arno at Rovezzano; To make it easier for him, a team of carabinieri who entered the "V" Brigade opened fire against the German patrols overseeing the river, and he profiting from the confusion threw himself into the water happily on the right bank.

He made effective suggestions to the Command "V" about the action to be taken at the time of the liberation of Florence (carried out with subsequent operations between 4 and 22 August).

He had been nominated chief of staff of the "V" Brigade and continued his activity until in February 1945, at the request of the American authorities, it was sent to the United States for other special services.

In the Provinces of Apuania and Lucca cap. freg. [Commander] Alberto Brofferio distinguish himself.

On September 8, 1943, he was in La Spezia to carry out a mission entrusted to him by the General Staff central (Maristat)

On September 11<sup>th</sup> he came to Viareggio, where he immediately made available to the local C.L.N. being constituted, in order to help organize armed resistance to the Nazis by collecting weapons and ammunition, food and money, creating a link between the movement in Viareggio and the similar movements in the coastal area between Carrara and Pisa and the Arno Valley up to Florence, the establishment of links with the patriotic forces of Piedmont and the Allies, gathering information about the military preparations of the Germans in view of what was later called the Gothic line.



Cap. freg. [Commander] Brofferio devoted with impetus and tenacity to the tasks he had proposed. Surveiled by the Nazi-Fascist police and military bodies, he was arrested three times: October 28, 1943, January 18, 1944, and March 5, 1944, spending altogether 100 days in jail. The first time he was arrested with him and then released was Adm. of sq. [Vice Arm.] Ettore Sportiello (former Superior Commander of C.R.E.M., moved from La Spezia to Viareggio); He was then arrested again and detained for 80 days in prison, under the charge of having favored and assisted people in hiding (which was true); He continued to help his companions of misfortune in a thousand ways, and behaved proudly toward the prisoners.

Cap. freg. [Commander] Brofferio, in the two intervals between the three arrests, had been given an increased lien to his work, succeeding in making the planned connections and establishing the first radio connection. With the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army, and to form armed groups that are sabotaging in the Carrara - Viareggio area. Among its most active collaborators were Colonel of the Army Pagano and the Captain of port Riccardo Rangoni, who replaced him after his arrest.

The Brofferio home was permanently watched, but fortunately the carabinieri vigilance left him sufficient freedom of action. He was also undermined by very smart agents provocateurs, some disguised as non-commissioned officers of the navy, until March 5, 1944, the third arrests, along with about 70 other persons suspected by the Nazi-fascists. With the help of the Lucca police force (that is, officers of the police who were in the double play) could be transferred as a sick person to a hospital from which he fled, taking command of the patriot formation in the area between the Serchio and the Crest of the Apuan Alps, South of Galliciano. Here he valiantly fought with his men until the liberation of Versilia (September 1944) by the 5<sup>th</sup> Army.

In his report, put forward. On October 16, 1944, Commander Brofferio recalls three of his collaborators who paid for their patriotism with their lives: "Col. Pagano of the Army, Mr. Mario Lena, an employee of La Spezia arsenal, I received news of his shooting, and the sergeant sapper of the engineers Pietro Pistis, who after being quietly through jail, the torture inflicted upon him, and almost all the partisan guerrillas fell in a patrol fight.

Commander Brofferio died near Lucca in a car accident on April 5, 1945, moving away from Florence to Lucca to meet with patriotic elements. A proposal for war-related promotion was in his favor, which would have offset his career disadvantages from an anti-fascist attitude in the period preceding the Second World War.

In Florence, he was an active member of the apolitical Brigade "V", Admiral Carlo Pinna (paragraph 19-b) and must be remembered cap. freg. [Commander] Roberto Servadio Cortesi (see paragraphs 19-d and 59) who, after leaving Livorno when all armed resistance to German occupation quickly became impossible, had reached the habitual domicile of his family in Florence. Here he enrolled, with the support of the Adm. Pinna, in the Brigade «V» and in May 1944 had succeeded in getting in touch with the S.I.C. in Rome. The Adm. Maugeri commissioned him, together with other officers, among them cap. corv. [Lt. Commander] Pier Luigi Tavanti, to organize the S.I.C. section of Tuscany. He performed his risky duty with success, proving sagacity, ability and courage.

#### 66<sup>th</sup> IN THE MARCHES.

An officer who commended laudable activity in the Marches was Major Commissioner Tomaso Cotroneo.

He was at the date of the armistice in Rome, at Maricosom (amm. di sq. [Vice Adm.] Antonio Legnani), as head of the commissariat service.

Closing the administrative office by distributing to the employees the established advances (three months of career skills and a month for that called or complement), he had pressing repeated invitations by Adm. Legnani to stay with him after he was appointed Minister of the Republican Fascist Navy. He refused, and after two failed projects to go to the South by passing the lines, he hurried to the spot in Corridonia (Macerata), hoping for a distant allied landing in Ancona.

After being isolated and hidden for about two months, in the care of an infirmity that had already afflicted him since he was in Rome, he contacted the local C.L.N. providing supplies to the bands

of patriots who were in the process of being organized. He had to move all the time, along with many fighters, to avoid the raids, and he kept informing as many patriots as possible about the activities of Nazi-fascists to enable them to adjust appropriately.

In the last days of May 1944, in the area of Macerata, the transit of Nazi-fascist troops withdrew from the Gustav line (crossing the Peninsula from Ortona to Gaeta, passing through Cassino). To reduce the damage that the enemy troops produced by plundering, burning and looting, Maj. Cotroneo, was among those who worked to steal as much as transferable (including cattle) was possible.

At the earliest news of allied avant-gardes approached them meeting with members of C.L.N. and during the long battle - eleven days - that lasted until June 30, 1944 with the liberation of Macerata, provided military information to the Allied (Polish) forces operating in the Marches.

#### 67<sup>th</sup> THE GOLD MEDALS.

It is imperative to close this work with the names of those who received, for patriotic merit, the gold medal for the military valor, reproducing the motives of the concessions that constitute synthetic reconstructions of heroic historical facts. In addition to the four of them, Brandimarte, La Marca, Mazzolani and Sas Kulczycki are eight, and we cite them in the chronological order of the concession decrees.

*Sottotenente g. n. [Ensign of Naval Engineers] Forti Sergio.* (in memory).

Young engineer elected immediately after the armistice the cause of freedom.

All daring and all courage arises in a multifaceted sabotage against the German oppressor and collaboration with bands of patriots of Umbria, the Marche, and Abruzzo.

In an enemy attack to the band of which he is part, a few with courageous, avoids encircling and capturing by opening a gap.

Outlined the retreat of the German troops studies and prepares an important interruption that is preparing to realize with other comrades of which two English.

Surprised by the enemy, with superhuman audacity and contempt of danger, he manages to save his comrades and faces the sacrifice alone. Being tortured make a confession is barbarously killed.

A generous soul, a bright example of altruism and patriotic love pushed to the supreme sacrifice.

(Viareggio - Cortona - Castelluccio - Abeto - Paganelli (Norcia), September 9, 1943 - June 14, 1944)

*Sailor Ginocchio Mario. (in memory).*

A young sailor, one of the first organizers of the Liguria partisan corps who wanted him as a deputy commander of the brigade, managed to survive his life to help his comrades overcome by the enemy. Repeatedly distracted by acts of sabotage, dreadful attempts, and fierce firefights, during a raid operation carried out by overwhelming enemy forces, he advocated the task of warning the Command of his own brigade of the inattentive to danger, but in the brave attempt at crossing the enemy lines fell to deadly machinegun burst.

A fulsome example of valor, altruism and glamor that make him a legendary figure, pride of the "proud people" who guard his memory.

(Cichero - Val d'Avete - Monte Pagliaro, March 1 - November 28, 1944)

*Chief radioman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Piccinini Gastone.*

At the beginning of the liberation movement he was boldly crossing enemy lines, carrying a radio transmitter, to take an active part in the struggle in the territory occupied by the Nazi-fascists. Taken by the adversary, he managed to escape by saving the radio, resuming his position as a radio-telegraphist at the service of air landing and voluntarily participating in all the arms of his partisan brigade, distinguishing himself by ardor and contempt of danger. While in a Milan house he was broadcasting messages he was encircled. To escape the capture by the enemy, after destroying the radio and the encrypted and defending it until the last cartridge, so as not to fall alive in the hands of the adversary, he launched into the void from the fifth floor embraced his only companion shouting: "Long live Italy". With the members horribly smashed and the fractured spine

But still alive, was collected by the Germans in the vain hope of knowing the names of his fellow fighters. The proud silence he kept despite the atrocious' sufferings and the cruel martyrs, whipped in vain attempts of the enemy and after a year of painful hospitalization, broke Nazi-fascist oppression, was freed by his comrades still admired of the memory of his actions and led to arms with limbs inexorably forever broken and the damaged spine in the dazzling sunlight of redeemed Italy.

(Castelnuovo di Benevento, December 3, 1943 - Colleferro - December 4, 1943 - Milan, 20 May 1944).

*Fireman A. Ricciardi Nino. (in memory).*

A sailor embarked on a Naval Ship in the waters of Trieste, on September 8, 1943, escaped the capture by the Germans and reached his native Liguria to the partisan formations that had already fought the oppressor. First among the first in the most risky business, always at the head of his team, he was animator and dragger of his companions against a numerically superior enemy.

Conquered a particularly important position to hinder the movements of the enemy, he maintained it valiantly despite repeated violent enemy counterattacks. Frostbite to the lower limbs by climatic inclination, he did not wait to rest and participate in new actions ever emerging for valor and distress of danger. He was wounded, still refusing to himself rescue for it being distracted by the decisive struggle for the fate of the Homeland and, as the enemy retreated, he fell hit in the heart.

Great figure of heroic partisan who gave his everything to the homeland. (Liguria, September 8, 1943 - April 8, 1945).

*Brevet Lieutenant medic Venticinque Giulio. (in memory).*

Embarked on a hospital ship surprised by the armistice in waters controlled by the enemy, he deserted the ship to escape the collaboration that had been imposed on him and to attempt to reach the freed national territory.

After a long period of march, he joined the gang of Greek partisans. In the laborious guerrilla war, he always followed the partisan unit, knowing the reward offered for his capture and giving generous work of health to many wounded. Caught

as a result of denunciation, he valiantly resisted mistreatment and torture, refusing to name and provide any useful information to the enemy. Condemned to death by hanging, he faced the supreme test with serene heroism and aroused admiration among the people of the place.

(Peloponnese, September 8, 1944).

*Sailor Parodio Giacomo. (in memory).*

The sailor of the "San Marco" regiment of a naval base located in foreign territory and captured, at the armistice, under German control, was subordinated to the collaboration and after three months of clandestine pilgrimages during which he was in contact with French partisan formations captured and subjected to trial. Conscious of the fate that was reserved, he definitely rejected the collaboration with the enemy of the Homeland, accepting without hesitation the supreme sacrifice. Confident of himself, in front of the execution platoon, he assumed austere attitude and repeatedly refused to be bandaged, waking deep admiring in the present. The last cry was invocation for the greatness of the country to which he was doing a sacrifice of life with firm and serene courage.

(Bordcaux, September 1943 - March 1944) '

*Quartermaster Torre Giovan Battista. (in memory).*

After the armistice, in spite of bad health, enthusiastically became part of the liberation movement and was repeatedly distinguished, during difficult and dangerous missions, by decision and courage. Injured - in the execution of a coup, he forced his companions to save themselves and allowed them to do so by attracting the attention of their pursuers. Fallen into the hands of the enemy, he was subjected to cruel torture for a month and kept proud and exemplary conduct, revealing nothing about the partisan organization.

(Fort of San Giuliano [Genoa], May 23, 1944)

*Second Chief signalman Zambelli Ilario, (in memory).*

Sub-Officer of high moral and professional qualities, from the outset of the anti-German warfare, participated in the fighting for the defense of the capital. He then joined partisan formation dependent on the Clandestine Front of Marine Resistance, carrying out precious information and liaison activities and getting into the assistance

of military personnel. Arrested by Nazi-fascists he repeatedly stoically repeated maltreatment torture intended to extract the secret of the organization to which it belonged. Bent in the physical, but not in the faith, did not provide the enemy with any news, preferring to courageously brave death. Taken bleeding from prison, he fell with other heroic comrades at Fosse Ardeatine.

(National territory occupied by the enemy, September 8, 1943 - March 24, 1944)

Finally, we recall a hero of the Army who fought in the formations of the patriots of the Navy, who was assigned in honor to his memory the gold medal:

*Captain of the Alpini Gasparini Vittorio. (in memory).*

He volunteered to cooperate with the Clandestine Front of Military Resistance by collecting and sending valuable military, political and economic information that was always the most useful to the victorious development of the liberation war. Arrested by the Germans and tortured for several consecutive days he respected magnificently without ever betraying or revealing secrets known to him, blaming others faults and succeeding in this way to exonerate a companion who was freed, Condemned to death was barbarously shot in a square in Milan, little away from their own home and their family members. A high example of indomitable courage and unshakable moral force, admirable figure of Officer and Martyr who crowned his own existence invoking the Homeland.

(Milan, 1 January - 12 August 1944).

68<sup>th</sup> SOME STATISTICAL DATA.

Until the date of compilation of this volume, the following statistical data had been verified on the involvement of Navy personnel in the fight of the patriots.

a) Volunteers of the Navy for freedom:

- Officers	700
- NCOs and sailors	19,500

b) Fallen:

- Officers	361
- NCOs	2,320
- sailors	8,303

c) Decorated:

- Gold medals	12
- Silver medals	256
- Bronze Medals	666
- Cross of military valor	1,508



## APPENDIX

### ALLIED AWARDS ALLEADED TO THE ITALIAN NAVY

Of the hundreds of letters and messages sent to the authorities of any degree by the British Navy Authority - regarding recognition or appreciation or praise or thanks for the most important performance made by Commands and Entities - we only reproduce the two most significant:

- Letter sent on August 27, 1944 from F.O.L.I. Adm. Morgan, to the Minister de Courten, in which the Allied judgment is contained on the overall contribution of the Italian navy to the war effort in the Mediterranean until that date.

- The letter addressed with the same date of the previous to the Minister de Courten by the Major Page, in recognition of some aspects of the assistance of military personnel in the fight against the Nazis in occupied Italy.

*Secret - Reserved Personnel*

Taranto, August 27, 1944

#### AREA COMBINED HEADQUARTERS TARANTO

Excellency:

During the visit I made to you on Monday, you asked me for the elements and data that were based on my communication at the general meeting of the Allied Control Commission.

I am pleased to announce it now, so that you can realize how much has been accomplished in these twelve months and the importance of the contribution that the Italian Navy has given to continuing the war effort in the Mediterranean.

I know you perfectly understand the current secretive nature of these news; although there is nothing contrary to you to communicate to your General Staff and to the members of the Government, I will be grateful if you will not allow them to be published in official and unofficial form

nor their use as a topic for newspapers or magazines. All this will be possible after our complete and total victory over the common enemy.

As for the *Battleships*, I only mentioned that the arrangements had been changed and that the three Ships, previously in Malta, had returned, one in Syracuse and two in Taranto, where they are currently employed for training.

I then went on to talk about the *Cruisers* and I said that the six efficient ones are generally four or five ready, and that in the last twelve months these ships have transported without inconvenience more than 130,000 men who have replaced as many of the "Allied forces in port services, workers' companies and many other important services in Italy. I have mentioned as an example the *Montecuccoli*, which in the past nine months has carried 30,000 men with 27,000 total navigation miles, equal to 1¼ times the World at the Equator. A great result.

I spoke little about the *Destroyers*, only by saying that the 8 Ships available were used here:

- 1 in Suez as a target for bombing and torpedo aircraft (a very useful use);
- 1 for special missions;
- 3 for troop and crew transport;
- 3 undergoing work.

Of the total of 40 ships between *Torpedo boats* and *Corvette* there are usually 26 ready and 14 undergoing work. I have pointed out that their use was mainly in convoy escort services and for this purpose they are assembled in whole units at the offices of Italian Superiors Commands. I mentioned how in these 12 months these ships have escorted more than 5,000 ships with the loss of only two ships.

I'm not very strong in math, but I think this equates to 0.004%, a primordial achievement, though pointing out how the attacks in Augusta - Naples and Augusta - Taranto or Brindisi were few.

I do not stay on the *Submarines*, but I just want to point out that they are doing a very useful service in anti-submarine training in Bermuda and in the Far East, as well as special missions in the Adriatic. Of the 32 available submarines there are usually 22 ready. There are also, as you know 5 C.B. type submarines. The use of which is of a training or experimental character.

I am now talking about *special missions*, most of which have been completed in the Adriatic by Motor Torpedo Boats and Mas, Submarines, landing craft and small torpedo boats. The missions consisted in landing and recovering Saboteurs and reconnaissance patrols, landing supplies and various materials, retrieving prisoners of war and many other similar, all-dangerous and dangerous attempts, 165 missions of this type has been accomplished in these 12 months, and of these, 150 have been crowned in full success. The reasons why the remaining 15 did not have a positive result were: ground fire reactions, bad weather, no ground reception of conventional signals or reception of signals that did not correspond to those agreed, and others.

On no occasion, the failure was due to the lack of ardor or courage on the part of the Italian Officers and sailors manning the ships employed. "I consider this a good result and I want to congratulate everyone, Officers and crew not only for their conduct and their valor, but also the very effective and satisfying manner with which these important missions have been completed.

Finally, I must mention the work provided by the Officers and Workers of the Arsenal of Taranto and the Franco Tosi Shipyard, and I believe that the following figures indicate for themselves how these men have made every effort for the rapid repair and efficiency of the Warships and British merchants, in order to maintain the maximum number of ships in full operational efficiency:

- British ships of various types on which large and small works have been performed: 690.
- Italian ships of the various types on which large and small works have been performed: 230.
- Allied and Italian warships and merchant ships placed in the basin: 575.

To test the efficiency of the Arsenal, I would like to mention the case of the monitor *Abercrombie*. Early in July, the Captain of the Mediterranean Commandment ordered to carry out repair work on this ship with absolute precedence over any other requirement in order to have the *Abercrombie* ready for an important mission. The ship was sunk on July 11; a visit was made to determine the damage, was fixed on August 20 as the date of completion. All relevant experts have agreed that the time set in 40 days was very "tight" and that it would have been in any Arsenal of the world with daytime and nighttime continuous work. Officers and workers of the Taranto Arsenal have managed to reduce this time by 25%, completing the work in 30 days. The ship left the basin on August 10 and left Taranto ready for combat on August 14.

In addition, the Chief Naval Engineer Service of the Chief of Staff of the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean told me that not only did he seem almost miraculous to prepare the ship in such a short time, but also that the perfection of nailing, welding and repair work was undoubtedly at all equal of the best results available in any British or American Shipyard.

I want to thank all those who have contributed to this magnificent effort to fulfill the order and wish of my Commander in Chief.

To conclude, I would like to mention the general attitude of Italian Officers and Sailors. I've been in Italy for six months now and I have not met a drunken or unrewarding sailor in the street; I must say that the presence of your sailors has always been exemplary and hold very much the comparison with the tradition of any Navy in the world.

I'm afraid this letter is longer than I wanted, but I know that the data and the figures I've written to interest you, and I hope that you are not far away the day you can publish them, if you so wish.

As far as I am concerned, I can only say that I am honored and proud to have known and have had to deal with men who have given such a large contribution to the war effort against our common enemy, and that in front of it have in all the occasions demonstrated an uncommon courage and a complete disinterest for their personal security.

With the assurance of my highest consideration, believe me sincerely yours.

Signed MORGAN

To S.E. Admiral R. de Courten  
Minister of the Navy  
Rome

---

ALLIED AGAINST THE COMMISSION  
ROME

August 27, 1944  
S.E. The Minister of the Navy

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N.0228

*Reserved Personal Secret*

I think that V.E. will be pleased to know the great assistance given by R. Italian Navy to the clandestine operations carried out in Italy occupied by the Germans by my Office in close collaboration with the "Calderini" section of the S.I.M.

During the German occupation in Rome, Admiral Maugeri directed a Navy organization within the city, which, although without a direct communications system, sent to Liberate Italy, through another clandestine group, very valuable naval information for the Allied Forces. In particular, on two occasions, we were promptly warned of planned attacks on Allied Ships by Mas and "assault vehicles".

When, immediately after the armistice, it was decided to establish networks in Northern Italy for information on the Army, the Navy and the Aviation, it was the Italian navy that provided almost all the radio operators needed. These operators then proved to be, both technically and as men, elements of first order.

Several Navy Officers have also undertaken missions in enemy occupied territory themselves to head information networks. One of these is currently the brightest of our agents.

In the winter of 1944, missionaries in Northern Italy from Brindisi were sent by means of Italian submarines, who carried out several of these dangerous operations.

In addition, the radio base now established near Rome, which controls communications with all agents employed, is largely manipulated by Navy personnel who are demonstrably and technically competent.

As you know, the nature of our work is such that it does not allow us to make public acknowledgments, but I would like to assure V.E. that the successes obtained and sincere cooperation demonstrated by the Italian Navy are well-known and fully appreciated by the Higher Allied Authorities.

Signed Major PAGE

Finally, we reproduce the following excerpt from the speech given by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the House of Commons on June 5, 1945:

"It is also necessary to remember that the Italian fleet has left its bases to join allied fleets, despite German orders to the contrary, as well as remember that it was attacked by German aviation and suffered losses of men and ships including a modern warship. His surrender was accepted by Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham in Malta and must be considered an honorable maritime event. The introduction of the Italian fleet into the whole of the allied naval forces was then of course helpful. Some of these ships served in the Mediterranean as a warships and as transport, doing a very appreciable activity. They also performed services in the Indian Ocean and in patrols against the raiders of the Atlantic Ocean. The arsenals have done important services ...

"The Government of H.M. did not want to deprive Italy of her Navy, which was an essential element in the national life, which we intended to preserve ... It was then established that Italian ships, for contingencies present, continued to serve the allied cause, Which they had already done with discipline and strength."



The Italian Navy from 8 September 1943 to the end of the conflict

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